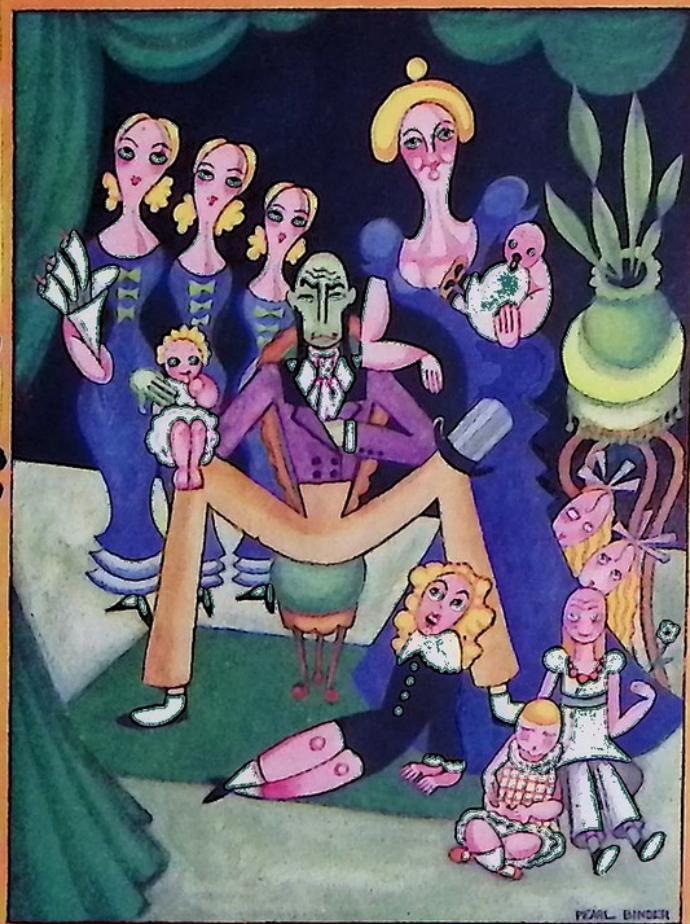


ALL CHILDREN  
MUST BE PAID FOR



LANCE SIEVEKING



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# **All Children Must Be Paid For**

By

Lance Sieveking

Published 1928

ALL CHILDREN MUST BE PAID FOR

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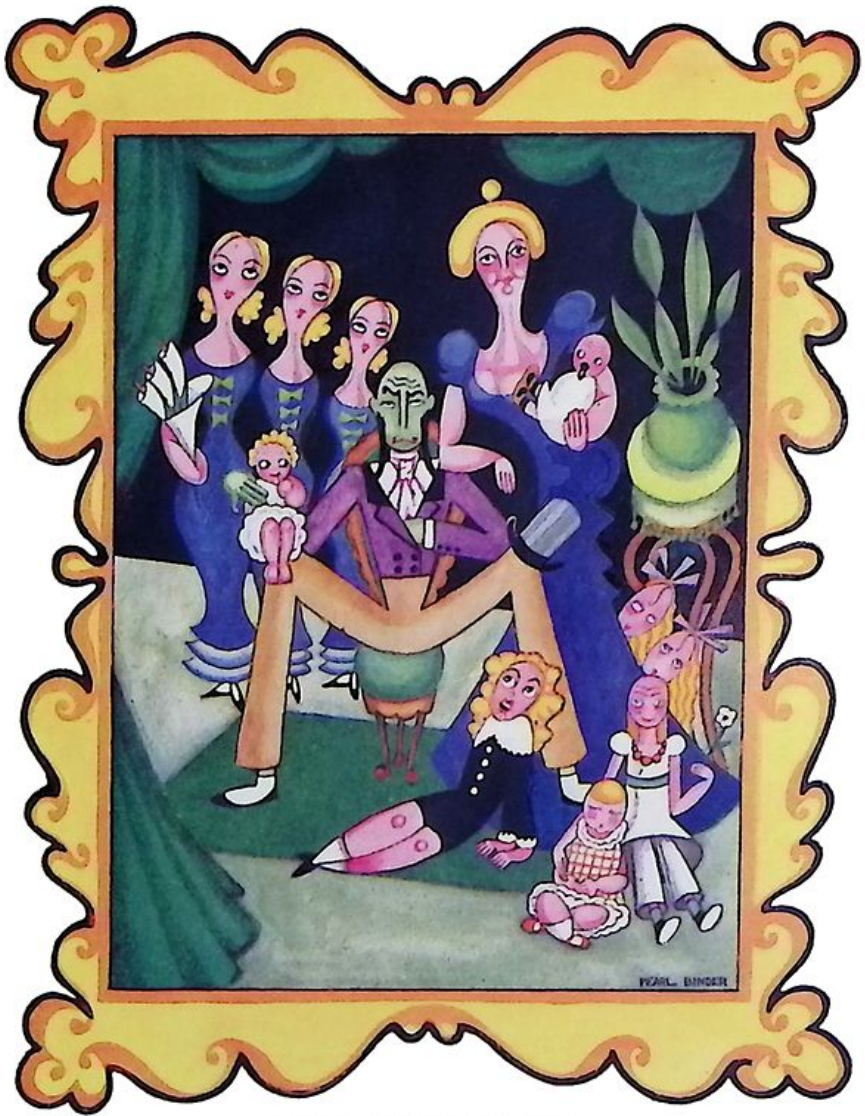
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FAMILY PORTRAIT (19TH CENTURY)

*Acknowledgments are due to this years Royal Academy for the frame*

***All Children  
Must be Paid For***

*By*

*L. de GIBERNE SIEVEKING*

*With Illustrations by*

*PEARL BINDER*

*NEW YORK  
BRENTANO'S  
PUBLISHERS*

*First Published in 1928*

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Dans la grande fête que M. de Talleyrand donna au jeune vainqueur d'Italie, Madame de Staël aborda le général Buonaparte et l'interpella vivement, lui demandant quelle était à ses yeux la première femme du monde, morte ou vivante.

“Celle qui a fait le plus d'enfants,” répondit Buonaparte avec beaucoup de simplicité.

Hilaire de Gai, *Souvenirs de l'Empire*.



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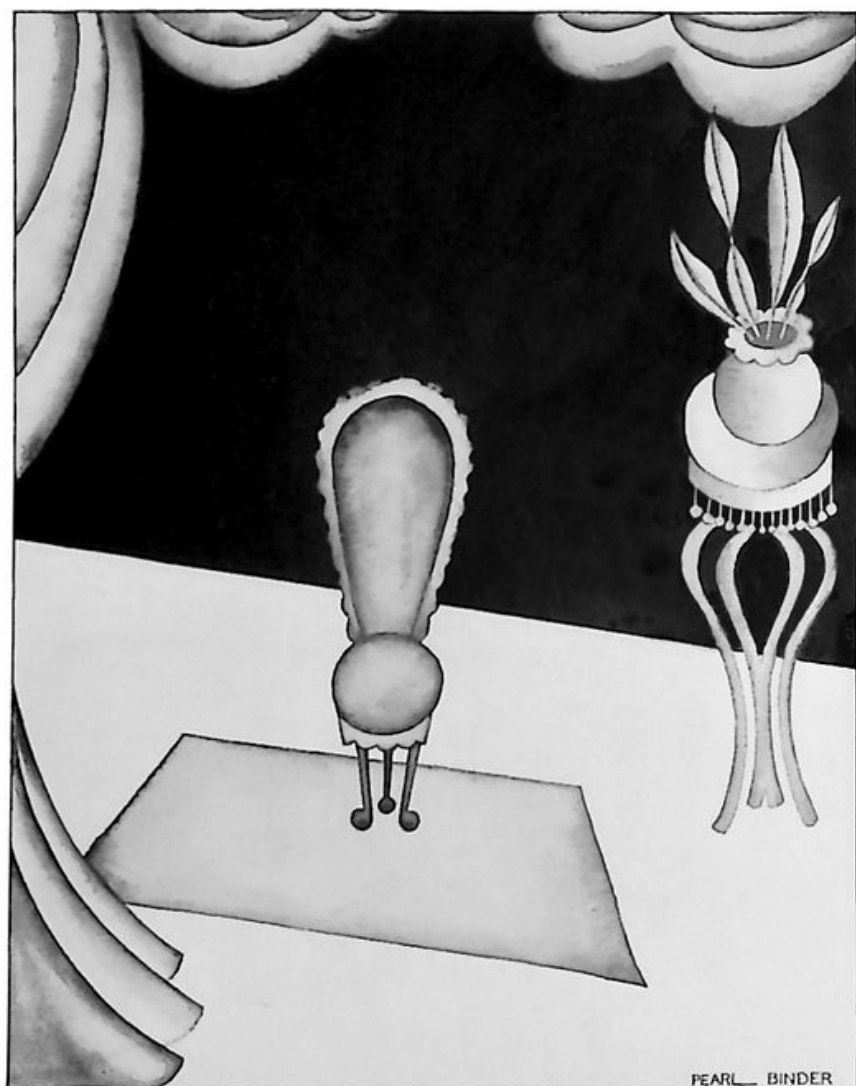
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ALL CHILDREN MUST BE PAID FOR



FAMILY PORTRAIT (20TH CENTURY)

## CHAPTER I

IT was a pity that Lord Downacre was of such an undecided nature. He was a decent, good-natured young man, somewhere in the thirty-sixes, and just the kind of fellow who should remain a bachelor. He had all the necessary attributes for the making of a wholly admirable life. He had a high-sounding, old-fashioned name, plenty of money, and a body suitable to all weathers. But it was Vacant Possession, as the house agents say. Here was the very man into whom you or I would step if we suddenly discovered the means of usurping for a time the bodies of other people, of appearing to be *them* and yet being *us* all the while! (What a time it would be! Presto! and instead of malting love to that recently matured and extremely exciting young woman you would be her — to all intents and purposes. And you'd walk about, change your frock, perhaps have a bath, rather lingering, hot and scented, and then decide to go and see that interesting young man

1

who trembled all over when you danced together — the young man who was in fact yourself! What possibilities! Alas, what impossibilities.)

Lord Downacre could have done what is sometimes rather loosely described as “anything.”



*Lord Downacre*

Anything he liked. Not every rich man can; there are a few rich men who either lack good looks, good nature or good health — very few of course. But when you find a young man like George Candry, Lord Downacre, who is not having much fun, it's sad. He had balance

2

in a bank but not in the head. He was blown about by every wind of opinion. Who talked latest to Lord Downacre was undoubtedly right, and would as

assuredly be wrong five minutes after the next comer. Some people would have called him a fall guy, some a boob, others a jolly good fellow. He was tall, ruddy, with a tendency to corpulence. He had a ready smile, and an admiration for Lord Lansdowne's style of dress. This, however, was modified by an admiration for the United States of America (his mother having come from one of the best families in Boston, the Thwaites, in fact). He lived in Portman Square, London, England, on the quiet side, because no one had suggested that he might move.

But though Lord Downacre did nothing, his home was the scene of terrific activities, for the Honourable Claire Collingdale was a Committee Woman. It didn't matter to her very much what were the aims and intentions of a committee provided she was on it. Some people collect Old Masters — some Old Mistresses. She collected committees, though she liked to think that they collected her.

At the age of forty-two Miss Collingdale knew what she wanted, and in this respect she

was unlike the man whose house she had invaded, who did not even know that he wanted nothing.





*The beginning of a Movement*

In the spring of the year 1927 she was Chairman of seventeen committees, a member of eleven others, and right in the thick of a score of Movements. A Movement is something which chiefly moves its supporters.

4

It was May, sometimes called the Merry Month. The bird was in the bush, the cab was on the rank, the

bloom was on the apple-tree and cheek of ladies of every size and shape, and the cat was on the mat.

“Good heavens! It is already half-past ten!” exclaimed Claire, glancing angrily at the white-capped maid who stood breathless beside her, a small wicker chair in either hand.

“Yes, Miss.”

“Quick, now! All the chairs in the morning-room are to be put in the dining-room.”

The girl started in that direction, but paused.

“And what will they sit on in the morning-room, Miss?”

Claire tch! ed.

“I hadn’t thought of that. Well, do the best you can. Bring down some of the chairs from the bedrooms.”

“Not the one with the seat out, Miss?”

“Of course not. One has to manage somehow on these occasions. Have you seen several sheets typed in red lying about anywhere? Miss White has mislaid them entirely! Really it is *too* bad.”

“No, Miss, but I’ll have a good look round.

5

These Committees fair extemporises the whole ’ousehold.”

She was a good girl and knew her place. It had taken her three years to learn how to drop an *h*, and more than that to get by heart a few suitable malapropisms.

Lord Downacre strolled idly in, carrying a book and dropping cigarette ash. Both these facts roused all the Good Woman in Claire.

“George,” she exclaimed, “what is that you’re reading?”

He started slightly.

“I really haven’t the least idea, my dear Claire. The girl at the *Times* Library told me it was good. She ought to know, after all. She has so many young authors through her hands.”

Claire blushed, or as near as she could get to it. “I have not forgotten,” she said, “that last week you were told that *Barren Hay* was a ‘good’ book. I do wish you wouldn’t scatter ashes everywhere. Good heavens! It’s a quarter to eleven already!”

“Splendid! The morning’s nearly over then.”

Claire bridled. She said, “Nearly *over*? I can’t stop here talking to you. Have you seen some sheets typed in red? No? They may be here any minute.”

6

The front-door bell rang, and after a space, during which Claire, assisted by the good-natured George, turned over everything within sight in a fruitless search, Ronald Beeches was shown in.

“How extraordinary!” exclaimed Lord Downacre.

Claire sighed, with relief. She had feared that one of the Meetings was arriving. She was half-way up the stairs as Beeches extended his hand and grasped that of Lord Downacre.

“How extraordinary!”

“What, my dear fellow?”

“That you should come rushing in here like that!”

Beeches grinned.

“I don’t see anything odd in it. I’ve been back in town a couple of days now. Come straight from Washington. Besides, I didn’t *rush* in.”

Ronald Beeches was one of those men who are beloved by most young women, though all that a fellow-man could see was a little fat chap who appeared to be bursting out of his clothes. Both his eyes looked like glass ones. He spoke with the chirrup of the Englishman who has consciously endeavoured not to get what is

7

represented in the English comic papers as an American accent, and continued to burst out of his clothes.

“Why, only last week at breakfast,” beamed Lord Downacre, thrusting his hands deep into



*Ronald Beeches*

his trouser pockets and feeling his thighs, “only last week — or it may have been longer — I said to Claire, ‘Good old Ronnie,’ I said, ‘good old Ronnie Beeches will be getting leave soon.’ Just like that!”

8

“Jolly decent of you,” laughed Beeches in a very English way; “but who’s Claire?”

“Well ——” A shadow of a shade passed across the other’s easy-going mouth. “Claire Collingdale, y’know.”

“I don’t.”

“She’s my sister-in-law — in a way.”

Beeches cocked an eyebrow up over one of his glass eyes and made a noise inside his waistcoat.

“What d’you mean, ‘in a way’?”

Downacre became explanatory.

“Well, she is — and she isn’t, if you understand.”

“What on earth...!”

His friend had another shot.

“You see, my sister Janet married Benjamin Trivitt.”

“I know,” replied Beeches, “but his name isn’t Collingdale.”

“Trivitt was married before — Amy Collingdale. She died.”

“And Claire was her sister, eh?”

Lord Downacre wore a baffled expression.

“I *think* that’s right. Yes.”

Beeches whistled. He felt that one whistled at this point. “Well then. She’s no relation of yours at all. And, anyway, how did she get here?”

9

“I’m not sure. You see, she came and lived here. Er — she’s still living here.”

Beeches shook his head reprovingly.

“Did you ask her?”

“Not exactly. Quite unnecessary. But then, you see, she’s like that.”

Ronald Beeches wandered across to the tall window and stared out at the sunlit trees. For a time he turned over in his mind the niceties of this situation. At last, without turning, he asked:

“How old is she?”

The other assumed a very solemn expression. "That is a question, Ronnie," he replied, "that a really clean-minded man such as I has never asked himself, even in the privacy of his inmost thoughts. I blush for you!"

Beeches whistled again. (It was an irritating habit.)

"As bad as that, eh?"

Lord Downacre nodded, and taking a card from his case he handed it to his friend. On it was written, "Mr. George Candry." It was a moment or two before Beeches grasped the meaning of it.

"When did you drop the title?" he demanded.

"A month or two back," said George Candry.

10

"She insisted on it. Strong Communistical ideas and all that. You mustn't be hard on her, Ronnie. She's a wonderful woman. Runs dozens of Movements. Does an immense amount of Good. And after all, as she rightly says, Portman Square *is* far more convenient as a base than Ealing."

"I dare say," grinned Beeches. "But the point is: is she going to marry you?"

George Candry, Lord Downacre, shuddered all over.

"Ronnie!" he pleaded, "don't suggest such a thing. Oh! I *do* hope she isn't going to marry me! All I want is to be left alone."

Mr. Beeches, second Secretary to the British Embassy in Washington, turned back into the room. Many women had tried to marry him, but none had even lived in his house without his express permission. His return to England was indeed timely if he could

save his old friend, his little playmate, his College chum, from being bound up in the chains of Holy Bedlock by a woman who was virgin on the ridiculous!

“Introduce me to this lamp-tender!” he cried.



## CHAPTER II

SHE'S coming down those stairs over there," remarked Lord Downacre.

Turning, Beeches saw her, and seeing her, realised just exactly what he was intended to see — the woman who wished to look like Charles Dana Gibson's drawings in the magazines. The ideal woman-of-forty. Tall, rather mannishly dressed, ribbon on the pince-nez, and hair done round in the Greek style like Queen Victoria before she was a railway station.

"She'll go very far, that woman," murmured Downacre.

"Looks to me as if she's pretty far gone already," murmured Beeches; only he murmured his so that only the curtains caught it.

"George!" neighed Claire, "I shall have to dismiss her! She's very useful in some ways, but the muddle of this morning is more than I *can* stand! Ah! introduce me!"

She had a way of not seeing people till the right moment. It came of long practice in

12

coming towards acquaintances on the Promenade des Anglais.

"Yes, yes, of course," clucked the addressed one. "Of course. This is Ronnie Beeches, Claire. This is Miss Collingdale."

Claire produced her second-best smile and they shook hands.

“Mr. Beeches! How dee do? I’ve often heard of you. As I was saying, Miss White must go.”

“A kind of W.M.G. — White Must Go, eh?”

“There’s nothing for it. She has confused the days again, and the Imperial Association for Combatting the Fall of the Birth-rate is arriving at the same time as the Committee of the Birth Control League. I don’t know how I shall ever manage to get them separated!”

Lord Downacre shuddered.

“My God! They mustn’t meet! I don’t want the house smashed up. Claire! Claire! Why can you not confine yourself to the Committees of things which are not diametrically opposed to each other! Who are not inimical, anathema! I wish you wouldn’t do it, Claire,” he sighed. “Here was I, quietly smoking, and in ten minutes’ time I may be dead — trampled under the feet of unborn babies.”

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Ronnie Beeches began to sing.

“Here were we a moment since,  
Smoking quietly to each other;  
Now we’re squashed as flat as mince  
Underneath the fruitful Mother.  
Heedless yet of Stopes and Penn,  
Of Malthus and of other men,  
The Womb of Time has opened wide,  
The womb of Earth and Fire and Tide  
Inimical! Anathema!”

The Honourable Claire Collingdale looked somewhat astonished, but made no remark.

Lord Downacre tugged his moustache and gazed sadly at the ceiling.

There was a sound in the hall at that moment, a sound of doors, umbrellas and murmuring voices.

“They are arriving already,” cried Claire, whisking away into the morning-room.

George tiptoed to the door and, ambushing himself behind a curtain that hung beside it, peered wildly into the hall. Every now and then he threw out an ejaculation and ducked his head like a man observed by a sniper.

At length he crept back to his friend.

“Well?” grinned Beeches.

“They seem to be sorting them out all right.”

“Good. But seriously — about this birth-rate.

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You know, it has been falling alarmingly of late. My chief was in China recently and he’s got the wind up properly. Out there, you know, the Chinese are like black-beetles. Can be great-grandfathers



*Miss Collingdale  
on her way to  
three committee-  
meetings*

in a night, and all that sort of thing. In the next war..."

Lord Downacre held up his hand weakly. "I suppose you've arranged it for the Autumn Season, Ronnie? You're as bad as Claire."

He took Beeches' arm desperately and marched

15

him about the carpet. "Come now, old chap, come now! Seriously, don't fire any more guns. They say it's guns that caused all that beastly rain we had some time ago. Can't you use only gas — or — or electric light or something?"

The bell began to ring again, and for the next five minutes continued intermittently. The sinister tramp of arriving Committees echoed around the walls.

Beeches extricated himself with a jerk and took up a position at the observation post. From where he stood he could see the front door as it swung wide to disclose groups of persons whose faces showed that each of them felt that the doorstep was not large enough to hold more than one.

Suddenly he called out excitedly:

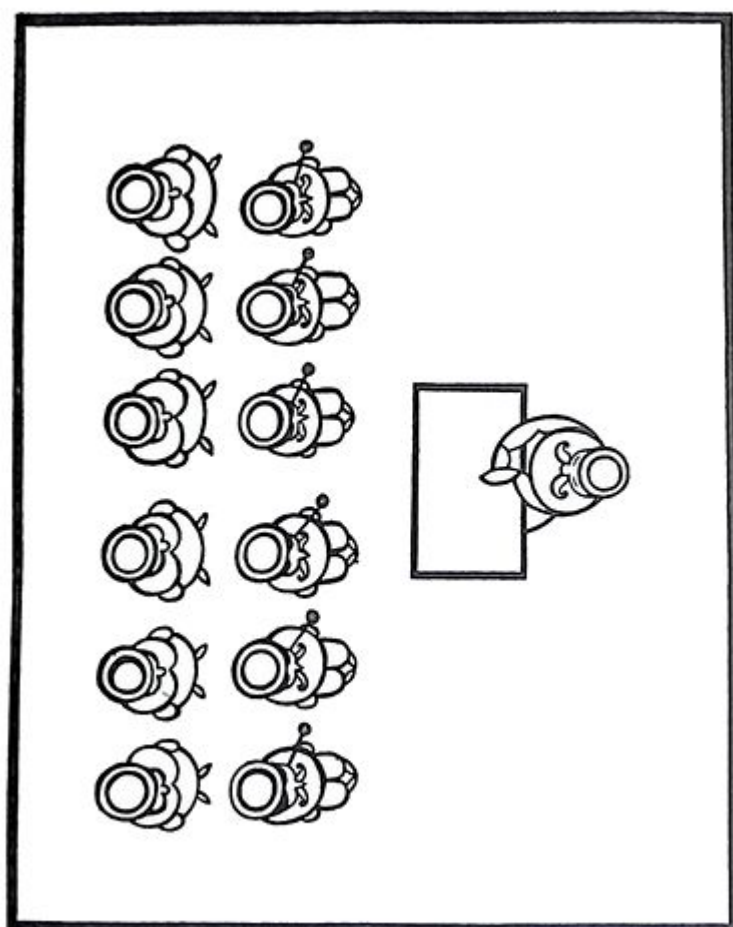
“There’s one old lady who’s forgotten which Committee she belongs to. She’s wavering! She’s wobbling! She’s changed her mind — ah! no. She’s remembered.” He heaved a sigh. “She’s gone.”

“Which way?”

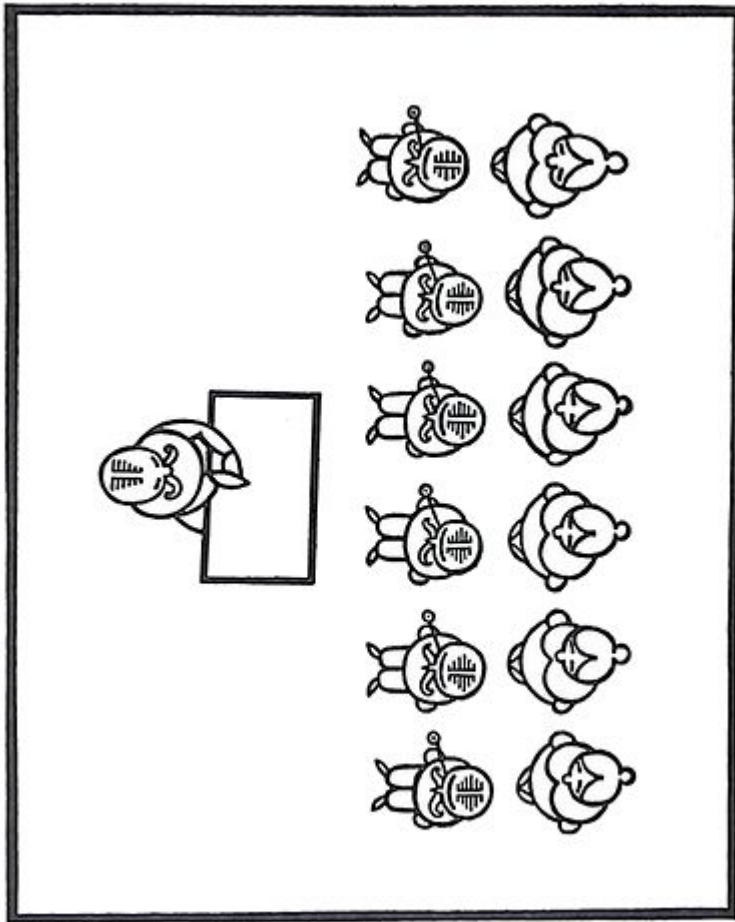
“Yes,” said Beeches thoughtlessly.

He looked for a little while longer and then, taking a step backwards, put his seat upon a table.

“I’m perfectly, deadly serious, George, me



*Plan of a Birth-Control Committee*



*Plan of an Anti Birth-Control Committee*

17, 18, 19, 20

lad. If we don't bring the birth-rate up to a better average we shall very soon be down and out. The Germans offer large sums of money for large families, and encourage 'em in every way. The French take a pride in having a lot of children — at any rate among the country classes. Grand place the country, George. They go out every day and work hard. The 'back to the land' slogan means everything to them. Any nice

evening if you take a stroll along the lanes you can hear 'em — back to the land. The Bolsheviks are coming on, and as for America — why, *they* go in for Mass Production. There's bound to be a war soon — somewhere."

"If *this*" shouted Lord Downacre, "is your High Diplomacy, thank God I am only a gentleman."

"You have no children," said Beeches accusingly.

"Nor have you, my Old!"

Beeches chuckled.

"Sing a song of celibates,  
A pocket full of gold;  
Four-and-twenty youngsters,  
And all of them were old!"

"For heaven's sake!" cried his friend, "don't you realise what it is to have a little reserve — a

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little nice feeling? To be, in the presence of the fair sex, a little constrained? We cannot all of us speak straight from the private heart. We are full of respectful shyness."

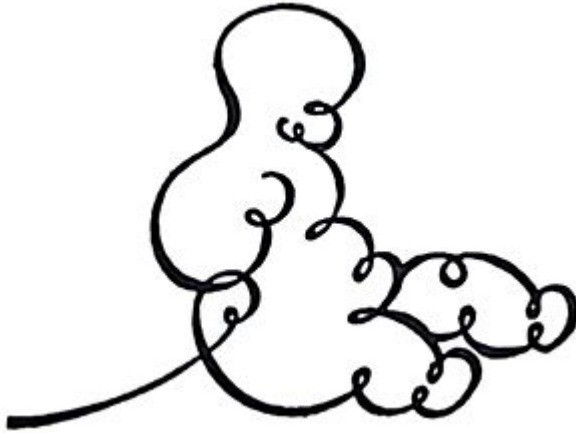
"*We, we!*" countered Beeches. "I don't like that we, George! I shall set up an egg box in the Park and tell the people what must be done. And on the banner over my head shall be the words:

'There are Millions now living who were Never Shy.'



What would you think of it if the same kind of war happened over again in a few years' time and every country except England had gone ahead increasing their populations? In a few days after the outbreak of hostilities we should be overwhelmed by the force of numbers, and all because you had been nice minded!"

"By Hek! Ronnie! you're right. We must go ahead! The population must be increased. Do it now! Start today! I say, which room is the Association for Combatting the Fall in? I simply must go in and tell them I support them! I must!"



For an instant Ronald Beeches paled beneath his bronzed, rotund exterior at what his playful enthusiasm had accomplished. How well he knew his George! And knowing him he feared. Such a fire once kindled might burn London in the fury of its blast.

"Be careful," he said abruptly, "be careful. Whatever you do, don't call them the 'fair sex.' All that is now only a figment in the minds of men like you. The only example of the 'fair sex' now left extant

is your sister-in-law (in a way). After her — the Deluge.”

So saying Beeches seized a hat from the floor and marched out.

Lord Downacre gazed after him blankly. His eyes were full of that strange light which fills the eyes of men who have thoroughly misunderstood something and are feeling supernaturally elated by a sense of power and purpose.

At this moment, while he was yet poised on the first pinnacle of conversion, the only girl who really admired him with the unqualified admiration of one who has a large fund of admiration lying about loose, came in. It was a morning of occurrences, and therefore better as a morning for a story of this kind than one of those mornings which are used for stories of

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other kinds. It is only after one has reached the point in one's career when he is given, and given cheerfully, advance royalties on twenty-five thousand copies that he may use the long morning in which nothing of any kind or description occurs. Then, the first thirty pages of the story need not be a story at all, but merely a kind of tiddling about with words; discussing in a sort of inky *sotto voce* whether one will write a story or not, or whether, on the whole, it wouldn't be more satisfactory just to have an advance of royalties on twenty-five thousand copies and leave it at that.

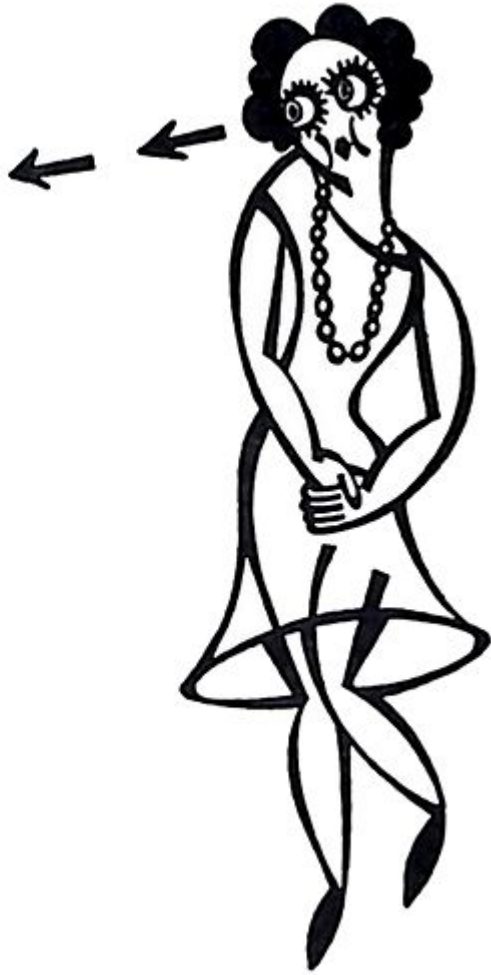
She came in. And from the instant of her arrival you could have seen exactly what it was irked her. Muriel

Pelladower was suffering from being nineteen and not quite knowing what to do about it. She started out to do something, changed her mind — thought something — embarrassed herself, spoke, checked herself, retired, came forward, blushed, laughed, and then all over again. Anybody but Lord Downacre would have known in an instant what was wrong. But he had a mind like a cardboard box. It never had anything in it but air, except what was put into it by someone else.

Muriel Pelladower was an exceedingly attractive

24

girl whose mother would have kept her in a tower in any other age — a high tower; and she would have had a lot of hair and spent her time



*Muriel  
Pelladower*

hanging it out of window, and using unguents and strange sour oils in the hope that it would grow till it hung low enough for something in top-boots to grab hold of and climb up. Of course the poor girl had no idea of all this. She had spent all her life keeping a guard on her thoughts till now she couldn't think at all. In fact Ronald

Beeches was wrong. She was a very good example indeed of the “fair sex.” She was so fair that even common men looked at her and preferred her. She spent every night of her life at the Gargle Club, or at places so like it even the proprietors of other clubs found themselves automatically dividing a single whisky between six glasses, splashing them with soda and charging half-a-crown a time, under the impression that they were on their own premises. (But then the proprietors of night clubs are very simple, ingenuous men and women for whom life is a queer, alarming business, however hard they try to live an upright and a godly life.)

“Oh, Lord Downacre,” said Muriel quickly, “I want you to come and dance to-night.”

“Don’t let Claire hear you call me that!” he exclaimed.

“Why?”

“Oh, I don’t know. She thinks...”

“Has she knocked off her! Hon’ yet?”

Lord Downacre shook his head. “Well, as a matter of fact she hasn’t done anything definite. But one must make allowances for her — in more senses than one, unfortunately — at least, *I* have to.”

Muriel Pelladower screwed up her lips for a platitude.

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“Sauce for the goose, you know.”

“Yes, yes...” He paused, turned about, collected his thoughts. A moment before surely, *surely* he had had a conviction, an enthusiasm — but what *had* it all been

about? Ah, yes! of course. He looked at the girl, trying hard to make his good-humoured face fall into severe lines.

“But there is something more important than dancing,” he said.

“Oh, but *no!*” she cried; “surely not? You aren’t going to tell me you are engaged to-night?”

“No! I’ll come. Delighted. But the nation is in danger! In the next war, with the Chinese like black-beetles, and the Bolsheviks like mosquitoes, and the Americans like — like whitebait — there are always such a lot of them, jolly little fellows! Fifty to a mouthful.”

The poor girl looked a trifle blank.

“What *are* you talking about?”

“The birth-rate is falling! We must catch it before it strikes the ground and breaks into a thousand atoms. We must either breed or — er — bleed!”

“Lord *Downacre!*”

“There goes that title again!”

27

“Lord Downacre, you — you are very strange this morning.”

“Very strange?” he queried; “surely not,  
For in this head of mine I now have got  
A huge and new idea,  
Bright, luminous and clear,  
Like a vast octopus all phosphorescent.  
'Midst alien corn, like Ruth,  
I stand and see the Truth,  
And I am filled with joy, like Annie Besant.”

“That must be very pleasant,” said Muriel, for she felt she must humour him. One never knew. Men were so odd. For that matter everything was odd. It was at the age of sixteen that she had first noticed the oddity of things. Life had begun to assume all kinds of new shapes, and so had men. So she was distinctly glad when Blanyre, the artist, strolled in, feeling his side whiskers with a sensitive and appreciative finger.

“Hallo, Muriel,” said the new arrival. “Oh, I beg your pardon,” he added, catching sight of Downacre, who had taken a long breath and had one arm extended in soundless, arrested eloquence, and who at once sprang on the fresh victim.

“Which room did you come out of, Blanyre? The Mores or the Lesses? Are you one of those

who want to put on the brake, or do you come from the camp which stands for quadrupling the population?”



*Blanyre—the artist*

“Emphatically, *no*.”

“To which does that apply?” bullied the genial George, trying to assume the manner of prosecuting Counsel.

“I came out of a room where there was a person making a speech on Birth Control. To

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tell you the truth, I was rather bored. I got born myself, some years ago, and *that* can’t be undone. But you



don't mean to tell me there's another meeting going on in the house?"

Lord Downacre chuckled. "I shouldn't wonder if there were a dozen. My sister-in-law..."

"...In a way," said the girl, with a naughty little chirrup, recovering her assurance.

"She is a genius."

"No doubt, old boy," murmured the artist, "but it left me cold."

"Do you mean to say that you are, as it were, virgin soil? That you have no definite views? Listen then! In the next war, with the population practically decimated — with no one but the dog to defend our shores...

Blanyre turned slowly to Muriel and smiled rather wearily.

"Whatever is all this nonsense?" he seemed to say.

She shook her head almost imperceptibly. She liked both these men in her ingenuous way — but at this moment she felt that Blanyre was certainly the nicer of the two. His mouth was a beautiful shape and he didn't say things she couldn't understand.

30

Lord Downacre blew out his cheeks and snorted.

"Surely you can see how frightfully important it is?"

"Yes, yes, indeed," smiled Muriel. "And you will call for me at half-past nine punctually, won't you?"

The voice of Claire Collingdale disturbed the ether at that moment, oscillating badly. She was addressing her secretary, the miserable Miss White.

“Where is that speech you typed out for me in red? The one I dictated last night for the A.C.F.B.R. You can’t mean you haven’t found it yet? Go up at *once* and look again. They’re waiting for me. I nearly gave them the wrong one — and then what do you imagine would have happened? When you come down, go in to the B.C.C. and help Mr. Bendover.”

She swept into the hall. “Ah, Miss Pelladower! How charming! *And* Mr. Blanyre!”

“I must be going,” said Muriel with unthinking promptitude. “Lord — Mr. Candry is going to dance with me to-night.”

Claire eyed Lord Downacre firmly.

“You can’t, George. You forget I shall want you to take the chair for the S.T.B.B. at

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nine o’clock. Perhaps Mr. Blanyre can take your place?”

“But,” said Muriel, coming as near a pout as may be in these days, “you *will* come, won’t you?”

Lord Downacre looked from one to the other and then caught Blanyre’s eye. It was a meaningful eye. He stammered:

“Well — of course — if I’m to take a chair — one of my own I suppose — er (why I should want to take my own chair I don’t know, however) — in that case I’m afraid I can’t, my dear. I’m terribly sorry!”

The artist smiled. “What about me? May I offer myself as a humble substitute? Oh, and by the way, Downacre, what I really came in about was the

portrait. When are you going to give me another sitting?"

"I can't say, my dear fellow. I'm going to be frightfully busy for the next few years. The birth-rate needs attention and I shall have my hands full."

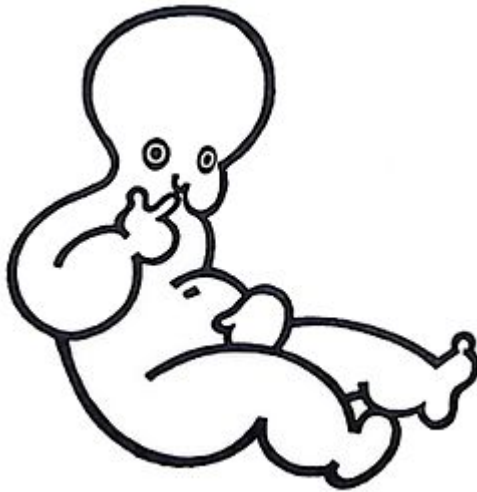
"I should say you will," exclaimed Blanyre, somewhat astonished.

Claire pricked up her ears at this. What was George saying? Attention? From him? *Most* unsuitable. To provide a house and base for

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her activities and to take chairs, these were his functions. He was far too stupid to be allowed personally to enter into the field of controversy.

"You are speaking very foolishly, George," she began. "Give Mr.



Blanyre another sitting to-morrow. I shan't need you till the afternoon."

"I shall *not*" cried Lord Downacre violently. "I have a lot to attend to. Very important indeed. Which is the

room the A.C.F.B.R. is in? I have something to tell them!” Waving his hand to the others he started briskly off towards a door.

“You can’t,” shouted Claire at his back, hastily following him. “You can’t! Come here; you must *not!* George, do be sensible....” Her voice was lost as they turned the corner.

The door slammed.

## CHAPTER III

LEFT alone, the two looked at each other in different ways.

"I'm married," he said.

"I knew that," she answered.

"How wonderful you are. You *knew* — and never said anything. This modern life, this London life of to-day, when young women know all and forgive all! It's very wonderful. Of course you and I know that it's not all one great petting party as the Arlens and the Huxleys would have their readers think. It's not. There's more — different — higher — well, if not higher at least different."

"I *know*" she said, her eyes leaning on his as one leans on a walking-stick.

"We're all chaps together now, and go cracking about as merry as can be. Poor devil, though," he exclaimed, remembering Lord Downacre, "she does mean to marry him after all."

"I *know*" said Muriel.

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He walked about a little, looking at her. What a waist she had! What a figure! A waste in every sense of the word. He would show her his pictures. She would appreciate pictures — not at first maybe; but later.

"Come and see what I've been doing?"

"Yes."

It wasn't far to his studio and his wife was away on tour. As they went he thought of poor old George Candry alone in that great house with a woman who ordered him about to the



*"I know,"  
said Muriel*

extent of making him give up his title. Not that that mattered very much, but it was symptomatic. They must have a party. He would arrange it, and George should come and play with the girls. It *was* a shame. It took a married man to know just how much of a shame it was. He would ask all the Americans in London, including Henry G. Bendover, and little Beeches, who had just got back.

But one must *talk* to girls. They don't like silent companions, except at the most romantic moments. He inclined his head towards Muriel. (What a figure she had! That long slim body. Those legs. Legs that repaid every penny of stockings at twenty-five shillings a pair.)

"Do you know, my dear, I have sometimes visualised myself making a great passionate disappearance. Suddenly and abruptly I would disappear, leave my wife and go striding out into the great open spaces where men are men and women are beyond description. There I should be bronzed and purified (but not too purified) and feed on Alfalfa grass and Mesquite or whatever it is, and become Hard-Boiled. What *is* the use of painting pictures that people just hang on walls? Can you imagine anything so futile, when all that hard-boiled life is waiting for one out on the prairies?"

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"I *know*," she said.

He had a moment's uneasiness. Could she be pulling his leg? He looked at her and decided that she couldn't.



*The great open spaces—where men are men and women are beyond description*

“But there’s always the gas bill,” he said. “That brings one back to reality. Good old Gas Bill! It rings true. *The hire of a meter involves the consumption of a thousand and ninety*

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*thermal units of gas.* It sounds like a Chinese proverb.”

Nothing went on in Muriel’s head. She walked beside him like a child. No thought passed through her mind. It was a pleasant airy-morning, and Bond Street smiled in the sunshine. Every now and then they



passed Americans in loose, shaggy, becoming tweed trousers that fell down over their shoes. She liked Americans. They were all like the heroes of the screen, and the screen is the nearest thing to life at present known in England. One day she would go to America. That, in fact, was the only thought which entered her head during the walk. And it didn't pass. It remained.

So, presently, they turned down Straw Place and came to Blanyre's studio. It was in the heart of London's richest and most exclusive quarter. Its door faced a stable and a public lavatory, and its window gave on to a duke's house and dung-heap. Its rent was past belief. They went in.

The studio was full of pale sunlight and the air shimmered with the sound of motor engines being warmed up in the mews outside. It was all very peaceful. Her memory was suddenly carried to the year before, while her daddy, her own sweet daddie, was still alive. And this is what she remembered.

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She was standing in the bows of her father's yacht *Gigolo*, and the wind blew gently through her short crisp hair as she scanned the ever-broadening prospect of Stockholm. The lights of the city were coming out one by one, and windows high up on the faces of the tall houses sprang into being like little torches.

Travel didn't seem to make any difference to her. Her outlook never broadened and her imagination was as unspotted by the world as though she had never been further afield than Bray — though of course one *has* heard it said that Bray is not exactly...

Muriel Pelladower was, after seventeen years of travel in every country in Europe, as unsophisticated as you or I were before we read *Sinister Street* or the novels of M. Stopes. She thought a fjord was a kind of motor-car that went up hills backwards; that Monte Carlo was an Italian actor; that the Negresco was a sort of patent medicine. Her illusions were many and amazing. She thought that rich widows were put out to Grasse rather like old mares, and that there was therefore something called a “Grasse Widow.”

Finally, Muriel thought that when people said they had been dancing at the — — Club, they meant what they said. But all these illusions

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were destined to be dispelled by what would otherwise have been a most charming adventure. A thousand pardons! I should have said rather that these illusions would have been dispelled but that Muriel Pelladower was the sort of girl indicated by the title of this extraordinarily



*Grasse widow*

witty and diverting “Conte” (as Balzac so drolly expresses it). She was the sort of girl you could hit on the head with a mallet and rob, and subsequently have no difficulty in persuading that the whole thing was an accident or a dream. She breathed the evening air laden with cheerful land smells, and was glad that in an hour she would be in some brilliantly-lighted restaurant, enjoying

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the far-famed cooking of which she had heard so much. It was going to be something quite new; as yet a complete ignorance of the country held her imagination — for last of all European countries at length she was going to see Sweden. She longed to stroll the strange streets and listen to the unfamiliar language, and in a day or two to go inland up into the forests and out-of-the-way country places, where the

people had quaint peaceful faces and told through the long evenings even longer stories.

With a slight jar the fenders scraped the high quayside and an official in a blue uniform addressed the man on the bridge in soft guttural tones. Muriel was not listening. She was lost in an age-long saga of youth, sung silently to herself — full of youth and burning eyes and strong arms.

A bright light blazed far above her, throwing out a strange uncanny illumination which seemed to get into her head and become mixed up with all her vague ambiguous dreams. Voices sounded all about her, but no word of what they said percolated the mist of her shortly-to-be-revealed egocentric phantasmata. She stood there, her straight little virginal body like an arrow stuck into the ground — bravely, one hand on the graceful hip, the other dangling lonely

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and unmoving like a pendant orchid, original, pliant, attractive.

She walked, still in a dream, towards the light on the quay — towards the light in the eyes of a tall someone who, as yet, had an existence only in her subconscious cerebral depths. The voices grew less and less away behind and below her as she strolled.

“Muriel!” called her father’s voice abruptly once, twice, thrice; abruptly — as some men make an epigram. But the slim fairy-like girl did not hear with her inner ears and passed beyond the scope of his voice.

A long straight street stretched out before her feet, full of light, trams, people and movement. She did not know its name. But it is not necessary for a girl whose eyes are like two teaspoonsful of the Regent's Park Canal at midnight to know the names of foreign streets. They know *her* name even though she may have forgotten it herself. On, on she went, her legs feeling lighter and lighter.

Suddenly a hand was laid on her arm and a voice which thrilled her through and through whispered "..."  
(But as I don't know any Swedish I think we will make him talk English.)

In perfect English, though with a slight and musical accent, a voice murmured:

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"Permit me to be of some service to you, as it is evident that you are unaware of the distance you are from home, and of the locality into which you have wandered; and in spite of the calmness of the weather your hair has become slightly disordered, therefore permit me to lend you a small pocket comb which I invariably carry about me in case of sudden emergencies — street accidents, riots, plagues, and acts of God or the King's enemies."

During this remark Muriel had been gazing at the young man — for such he was, and as handsome a one as in a day's march — so the phrase runs (though somewhat out-moded) — you would come upon. His teeth shone ivory-wise, flashing the electric glare intermittently upon her fair young face as he talked.

The girl gratefully took the comb and combed her hair.

“Is that better?” she asked at length, also in perfect English.

“You are the most beautiful girl in the world,” he replied, smoothing his immaculate white waistcoat, tilting his faultless straw hat, and feeling his exquisite black bow tie with an ease and suavity bred of long habitude in the smoothing, tilting and feeling of such things — chap’s things they were, in a manner of speaking.

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And in the meantime the girl was beginning, in spite of herself, to feel the pangs of a highly unromantic hunger. He had already dined, this young stranger — not that there was any evidence of it — but merely it was by now long past the hour of dining.

“Won’t you accept my company at table in the grill-room of my hotel?” he asked; not diffidently as a younger man might have done, but with the confidence which is unaccustomed to refusals. She did not refuse, and in a few minutes they were seated in a corner with the shaded lights of a large crowded room softening to her eyes the tell-tale marks on the face of her companion.

Soup came, and lobster, meticulously garnished with ambiguous sauces; and a beaker full of the warm Clicquot with amber bubbles winking at the brim, emptied itself and was unobtrusively filled once, twice and again. They talked of this and this, smiling and gesturing thus and thus.

“Then you *are* an admirer of the Neo-Goyans?” he urged, leaning forward across the little table and gazing into her eyes.

“Oh, yes,” she admitted; “but you don’t mean to tell me that you have any here?”

“A very modest little collection, I flatter

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myself, by some of the best imitators of the day,” he told her.

“How marvellous!”

“You will come up and see them before we say good-bye?”

She inclined that distracting provocative little head of hers, among the hair of which still clung the pocket comb for emergencies — forlorn, forgotten.

Coffee came, black and potent, and a little crystal glass of something biting and delicious.

Up went the lift to the fourth floor and Muriel found herself in a long quiet room. Round the walls hung many pictures, some reflecting in their glass the vivid patterns of the Aubusson carpet.

The young man stood close behind her, and when he spoke there was an odd tremble in his voice.

“Don’t you think that the figure in this one is singularly beautiful, dear lady? See the hips and the long curve of the thighs.”

Muriel felt his hands about her waist, indicating what he would have her admire in the picture. “...And the scarcely developed breasts of the young girl...”

Again, like a lecturer before a black-board, his

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fingers indicated the point referred to. She nodded with interest.

The young man led her to the next.

“See the reclining position, and the consummate technique which has gone to the depicting of such a torso!” he exclaimed rapturously.

Muriel, easily adaptive to her surroundings, reclined on a long settee, her elegant ankles coming into view, covered by delicious silk.

Later on she asked her host, “And is that really what they call a ‘private view’?”

“That’s it, my dear,” he responded in a friendly way. “And now perhaps I had better show you how to get back to your papa’s yacht before he has time to think you are lost.”

She smiled innocently at him. “That’s very nice of you,” she said; “but before I forget, here is your comb.”

Muriel was a very honest girl...

*A certain sound brought her abruptly back into the present.*

*She looked up, dazed, and found Blanyre staring at her.*

*“Is this what they call a private view?” she asked innocently. He nodded slowly.*

*“I guess that’s a good way of putting it,” he murmured.*





## CHAPTER IV

L ORD DOWNACRE ran into the room with Claire Collingdale close on his heels. Some twenty people turned absorbed eyes upon them and then back to the speaker. Then the speaker spun round and their eyes followed. It was like the audience at Wimbledon when Suzanne is in the centre court. To watch the play is one thing, but to watch the audience is the way to Earlswood or a kindred hotel — in other words, the way to being no longer on one's chump. The eyes of the onlookers go from side to side as though they were all one great machine — or a thousand-eyed Buddha reading a book. Left! Right! Left! Right! *This way! That way.*

Back spun the speaker. There was a moment's silence, then Downacre stepped up beside her. Claire's tall Dan Gibsonesque figure jumped also, a hand on his arm, but too late.

"My friends!" he cried, his great face beaming, "I come to, you urged by the force of my

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feelings. I come to tell you that I am convinced. It is true! but I never thought of it till this moment. The birth-rate is going down. This must be stopped — and stopped now!"

"George!" commanded Claire, "be quiet! You don't know what you are saying!"

Mrs. Crumble, who a moment earlier had been addressing the assembled Committee and members,

gazed at Downacre open-mouthed. So did the Committee. They changed from Wimbledon to the Aquarium and became a group of fish facing a snail factory. Goggle, goggle. But Downacre was undeterred.

“Something *must* be done,” he said, “and *I* am here to do it.”

He paused, and Mrs. Crumble, a little embarrassed, came up to him.

“Good-afternoon,” she began simply, “it’s very kind of you to come and give us your views, but...” She glanced at Claire, who was suffering from that distressing and almost universal complaint, Hot-eye. Hot-eye is caused by excitement behind powerfully magnifying spectacles. Claire said silently to Mrs. Crumble,

“Go on quickly, stop him if you can.”

“I always feel that the most satisfying thing that can happen to anyone,” burred Mrs.

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Crumble in a sort of hurried undertone, “is to convince a whole roomful of people. The speech I delivered just now did not leave an unclapped hand. They clapped me to the echo! To the echo!”

Lord Downacre, a little put out by the interruption, did his best to be polite.

“How nice, madam. How nice. And on what subject were you speaking?”

“What *subject*? Why, Birth Control of *course*.”

“But not ‘*of course*’ surely? You might equally well have been talking on brown sugar or the rewinding of

watches.”

“George,” breathed Claire, passing her hand across her high forehead in something approaching anguish, “I must beg you not to be flippant on a subject of such gravity.”

Downacre’s huge round face hung over her.

“Gravity, Claire? Grave it certainly is when a lady of such evident intellectual capacity gets hold of the wrong end of the stick. Madam,” he went on, looking at the shorter lady, “*have* you ever considered the next war? *Have* you? There is only one thing for it. We must go on increasing the population until...”

At that moment there was an uproar. People rose in their seats and swayed about.

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“Who is this?”

“What is he saying?”

“He’s mad!”

“This is preposterous!”

“Turn him out!”

(Squibs in a back garden to amuse the children and singe father’s eyebrows. Pop! Pop!)

Lord Downacre looked at that moment like a large, pleasant dog who has been chasing a number of sheep until suddenly and incredibly the sheep all turn on him, snarling and showing their teeth. He backed towards the door. What was happening? Surely he could not have come into the wrong room? That short lady — one of those who no matter what they do always look as though they were dressed in the national costume of some country that one cannot put a name to — (highly

coloured and woolly) — *that* lady, she could not in dead earnest have been speaking to all these people on the subject of birth control, for surely — or at least from where he was standing — surely, if the indications were not curiously deceptive, such a speech would be in the nature of a bolt-shooting and key-turning after the horse was well down the street. For, so he thought, at least four of

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the ladies present — no, five — would very shortly replenish the earth.

Was this a nightmare? Did Mrs. Grumble's national costume conceal cushion, and was she playing some fantastic game? Or was she *not*? Or was she *NOT*? That was the question.

"Madam," he thundered, "I agree with you all! You are right! There is only one way. From this moment, as I was saying, we must go on increasing the population until there is not one *inch* of country uncovered! Until whichever way you turn you tread on someone's toes. Well, perhaps that's carrying it a bit *too* far. But anyway, until you couldn't go for quite a short walk without meeting millions — billions of people!"

"Sir! You flabbergast me! Can you for one moment... Do you know to whom you are speaking? We are the Committee of the Birth Control League."

Lord Downacre's brain reeled.

Then they *were* playing some wild game. He looked again at the five ladies in their national costumes. No; it was not possible.

Delicate ground this. The ice was thin and he had very nearly broken it. A wave of his old shyness came over him. He began to have a sensation of “nice feeling.” Maybe these

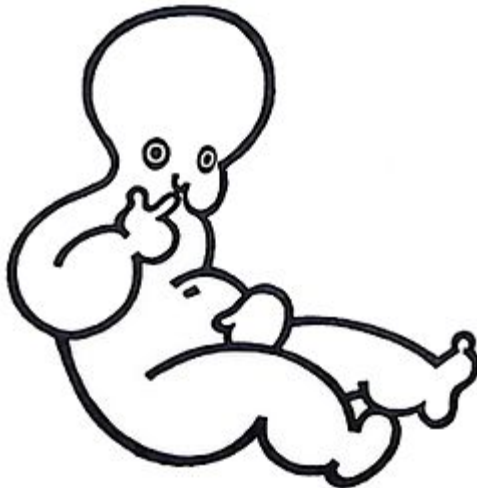
52

good people were actually regretting when it was too late. Should he not more rightly sympathise with them? Again no. That would be weakness. They must not regret.

He raised his voice once more.

Claire fidgeted about ineffectually. Confronted by a real dilemma she was lost.

“My friends,” he asserted, “all is well. It is necessary that all of us — I as well as you — should give our whole-hearted support to the raising of the birth-rate. No, don’t stop me. Why, think! They might declare war tomorrow. Where’s my revolver? No — damn it! there’s nothing in the house but a typewriter. But I shall do my duty. I shall get married to-morrow — that is, as soon as possible...”



Claire found her voice.

“To whom, pray?”

He glanced at her, startled. Marriage was all right — but had no connection with his sister-in-law.

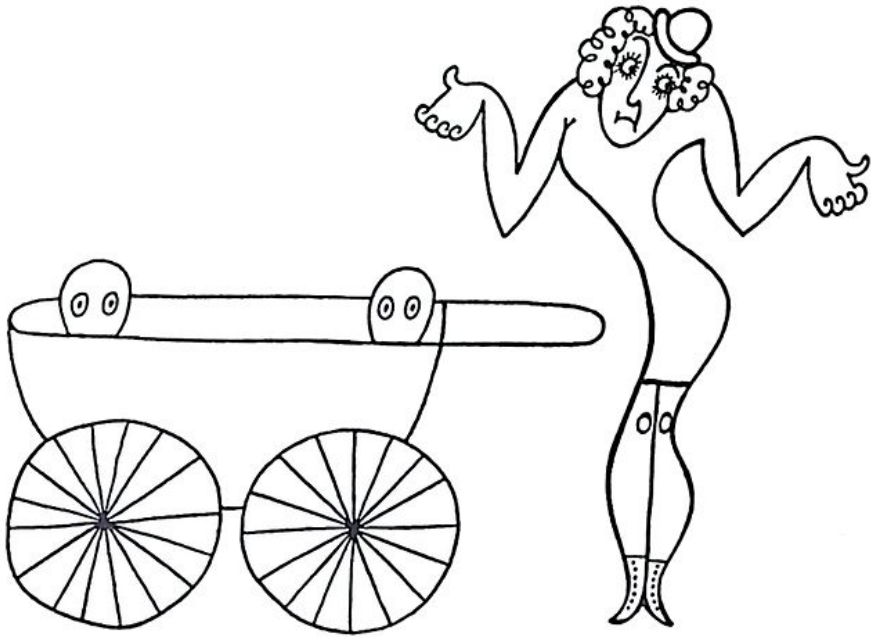
“I’m glad, George, to find you taking such an interest in things — even when you don’t understand them. But what is this talk of marriage?”

He side-stepped.

“Merely exuberance, I assure you, my dear Claire. I’m devilishly exuberant, aren’t I?”

The Committee had fallen into a kind of trance. Looking at them made Ronnie Beeches’ voice seem to ring in his head. He must make one more effort to persuade them that what they were undoubtedly going to do was right. A thought struck him. Was the production of a family perhaps right for them but wrong for everyone else? Could he but have known it, this was the secret of the matter. All the five ladies were already proud matrons replete with every Victorian domestic adjunct in the shape of progeny and still some aces up their sleeves. Nor did they regret. There they sat on each Committee Meeting day, and contemplated a

vision of innumerable young couples enjoying the gifts of the gods without ever having to push a Blunder-Bus about the park, as *they* so happily did (only in their case it was a pram).



*A blunderbus*

Lord Downacre fell back on persiflage — the refuge of the shy and sometimes of the diplomatic. He decided to carry out a Great Plan — which at that moment had begun (shocking though such conduct was) to germinate in his brain. But for the moment — persiflage.

“Claire, you remind me of the old problem;

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if two irrefutable Movements meet one irresistible woman, what happens?”

Mrs. Crumble looked blankly about, but he went blandly on:

“The Movements become stationary, which is a contradiction in terms and is absurd. But I am going to make the impossible straight line tight through that door.”



“George,” asked Claire weakly, “where are you going?”

“Where am I going?” he echoed. “Oh, to the Zoo. I’ve just heard that the Sea Lion and the Polar Bear have had two more sets of twins!”

He strode out.

Committees? What use were they? A meeting in the Park. That was the thing!



*Good Heavens! Can Mr. Sieveking mean this?*

## CHAPTER V

RONNIE BEECHES blew into the Club, blew across the hall, and up into the bar. Here he found, surprisingly enough, his somewhat alarming acquaintance, Blanyre the artist. He was always a little suspicious of the man. He wore side-whiskers and rings — but then, Beeches supposed, art demanded sacrifices.

“The odd spot, old bean?”

The artist started.

“My dear Beeches! Where have you been all this time? Australia? Or where did you hear that curious old phrase?”

“No. The States. I found the Americans charming — but oh! how true to life.”

Blanyre pushed a small glass towards him, in which a stabbed cherry lay dying, the spear still embedded in its heart.

“I don’t know what you mean by that,” he said wearily, “but then, of course, it is not necessary to mean anything in these days.” He leant languidly on one elbow, and with a certain

severity in his mien added: “if you *did* mean anything — let’s have it.”

Ronnie Beeches giggled. This artist chap always made him self-conscious. He ran a hand over his buttons to see if each was doing its duty. He picked up

the cocktail and nearly swallowed the match. Then he giggled again.

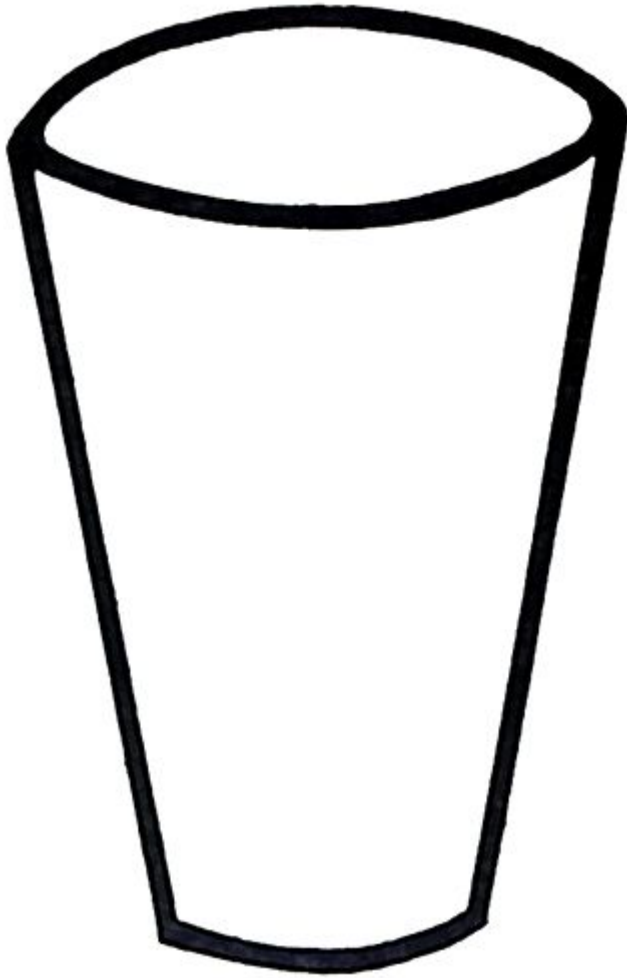
“*You* know. Strong without being silent. I had always rather respected our strong silent men, who are silent because they hadn’t got anything to say. But when they’re strong and talk as well it doesn’t give a fellow a chance.”

The bar was long and brown and shiny and had on it a saucer full of chipped potatoes, a saucer full of black olives, a saucer full of coffee beans and a saucer full of assorted nuts and cloves. During their talk Beeches and Blanyre ate all of these and got, according to the intention of the secretary, extremely thirsty. In these circumstances time, as such, ceases to exist, and the talk goes on.

“Talking of women,” Beeches was saying, as the barman replaced glasses like this:



by some like this



“It is inevitable,” murmured his companion, “one always does.”

“Talking of WOMEN,” repeated Beeches, “the trouble with them *really* is, that they have so long been taught to keep a guard upon their thoughts that now they haven’t got any thoughts to keep a guard on.”

“Don’t you believe it!” leered the artist. “I was with a little lady yesterday who...”

“Tut, tut! No ladies’ reputations in the conversation, Blanyre. The King has not been drunk.”

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But the other was in the mood for boastful reminiscence, and nothing would do but that he should retail how a young woman, under the age of twenty, had, in his company, quite a number of thoughts upon which, apparently, she had no kind of guard whatever. Beeches built up a mind picture as he listened, of a long low room with a large north light facing east (as they so often do); there was a dais at one end, and some cushions for a model to recline upon. Expensive accessories lay about: gilt humpty-dumpties, gold cigarette lighters, a marvellous ebony gramophone, Kelim rugs, Feelim rugs, Kneelim rugs, Arabian mats. A vista of the Duke’s house, but no suggestion of the dung-heap. Some large canvases are piled against a wall and an easel and a heap of brushes suggest the key to the scene. But the key doesn’t fit. It turns in the lock of the door, and in comes the artist, gently guiding his companion with one straying hand as men will when showing attractive young women the right way into their rooms. It is afternoon. They have lunched well at the Berkeley. If you want their menu it is to be found written on the leaf of a lotus, and the shape of the letters is the shape of the caterpillar’s teeth. “Come in,” he says; she nods

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with a quick smile, and stepping over the threshold utters a little gasp; it is not a gasp of surprise, but the sort of gasp a girl gives when she steps over the

threshold of a man's studio when they have lunched well at the Berkeley and the menu is written — but you know all that. And the man is twice her age and married. Why is it that girls respond to the slow, efficient advances of middle-aged men? It is a question of infinite interest, and its answer is a great consolation to men who are moving north from forty. "I said I would show you my pictures," he says, and she smiles again. Her eyes are all swimming, as the schoolgirl says; swimmy and dimmy — Endymion. They do not look at each other, but at all the things that fill the long low room. *Then I drank some more champagne, and then some more; did I do wrong? Can't you remember?* The chestnut tale swims into his mind and he smiles. These are my pictures; nudes attenuated and nudes bottom upwards; I am not really a good artist. The pictures fall slowly backwards on to the floor as he turns them to the light, makes a passing comment and pulls out the next.

The girl is tall and slim in Ronnie Beeches' mental picture, even taller and slimmer than she

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actually was; and beautiful as only the girls of to-day can be. How their grandmothers ever "got off" is an insoluble riddle. Nature alone knows what wiles she gave her daughters to overcome their outward appearances.

The girl was lovely. (Shoes by Pinet, stockings by Lanvin.) She warmed what are sometimes called the cockles of his heart. (Cockles by Clarkson.) She was so willing, so anxious to please, so simple in her

behaviour, that all the perfumes of Arabia could not have made her more alluring. Her long creamy arms felt wondrous smooth against the back of his neck. "I trust you utterly — utterly..." The afternoon wore on, and at length a rude electric lamp-post opened its eye and peeped in at the skylight.

"Utterly," echoed Beeches, with a deep appreciative sigh. And then, "We must have a party!"

"Exactly what I was going to say to you," answered Blanyre. "William! Two large dark Pilseners. A party. Saturday, I think. That'll give us enough time to collect the Russian Colony. What a mercy my wife is still on tour. I must try and get Bentham to offer her a new job before she gets back to town! A

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party! Who'll you bring? I remember you used to be devilishly good at cup-concocting. Bring Charles if he's about, you'll find him at the Air Force Club — what he doesn't know about cup!..."

They agreed to dine together to discuss the party, quietly at a little place only known to Mr. Arlen and myself, where the dancing that is. the curse of our eating classes is unknown. The waitress was all that a waitress should be, but her legs were like ninepins. Beeches murmured to his companion:

"Curly legs, curly legs,  
Wilt thou be mine?  
Thou shalt not dress salads,  
Nor yet feed the swine."

“Swine yourself,” said Blanyre rudely. “And that reminds me, we simply *must* ask Downacre to the party. The moth is simply getting at the poor fish.”

“George?” echoed Ronnie Beeches, “of course he shall come. We will give the party *for* him. He shall come out. An elderly debutant. He shall play with the girls. That sister-in-law who has taken possession of him has designs upon him I am certain. We must act before it is too late.”

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They ate some more.

Then. Ronnie told the artist a long rambling story about a visit to a girls’ school outside Washington. But as he told it to three separate people at the party there is no need to record it here.

As they lit their cigars Blanyre closed his eyes.

“We mustn’t have too much light in the studio. That was a great mistake we made last time. I like it dim myself. When it gets dark I don’t know the difference between right and wrong.”



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## CHAPTER VI

IT is curious to follow the antics of actual people, because they take so many extraordinary turns that one is delighted at their absurdity and quite forgets one's own. How much better then to follow the actual antics of persons whose actuality I and the publisher officially deny, as in following their absurdity one may remember one's own and be thankful.

Lord Downacre's mind was filled with one thought, and one only, since his mind, like a girl's arms, was only capable of holding one at a time. The birth-rate — hitherto an abstract idea which had never crossed his path — now became a great black chimera, a thing to be appeased, to be dealt with, to which to devote one's whole energy. Everything is an attitude, either of mind or body — but we have, I think, had enough philosophical tump; enough, at any rate, of that kind of elephant-handed swat-that-paragraphist Doodle. Lord Downacre (the young

man in the early thirty-sixes, who was just the kind of fellow who should remain a bachelor, and who had all the attributes for the making of a wholly admirable life, and who — but you've been handed that bit before) was at that moment tearing across the West End towards the offices of a man called Shafferington — (Note to Miss Binder; short, thin in spots, with feet like bathroom taps and fingers like spanners; would have had a fine chest if he kept it where he sat down,

and ate cachous that made his breath as sweet as new-mown hay, but you can't draw *that*) — who was an electioneering agent on his Sundays off, a snow-shoveller from May to September, and a hay-maker November to April, so he had plenty of time to smile back at lords.

“Yessir — lor luv yer,” said Mr. Shafterington obligingly. He said it like that — vulgar, isn't it? He said “luv,” whereas you and I always say “love.” Shocking thing! Later on he said Downacre could have it “if the wimmin hadn't broke it.” “Wimmin” if you please. The difference between “Women” and “Wimmin” would seem to be obvious to the most unsophisticated palate, though there *are* those who maintain that they're all alike — which is neither here nor there.

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You don't like this kind of writing. No sense, no punctuation. No, damn it, nor do I.

Let's be clear, nett, decisive, like a Parliamentary candidate before he gets a seat.

Lord Downacre, with his huge handsome face and patent leather boots, was talking to Mr. Shafterington, who was all those things, about the stool thing Mr. Shafterington had, which he hired out to people who wanted to make a speech in the Park. You didn't know that such things could be hired. Nor did I. As a matter of fact they can't. It had a sort of table thing attached to it, and a sort of tub thing (where you thump) at the back of it — well, *you* know what I mean, and Lord Downacre said, “Is *that* where I thump?”

“Yes,” said Bernard Shafferington, “that is the place. The last man who thumped it was locked up in the Stogg Eggschange for calling Queen Victoria Mrs. Henry Smith, but the reference is so out of date that you don’t know wot it is about.”

“Oh!” said Lord Downacre, “how jolly. I have had a cup of cherry blossom in bed, and which way is it to the Park?”

“That way,” said Mr. Shafferington, pointing towards it, “but be careful; the bishop is highly particular and the perleece most presumshous.”

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As he had notified a good many of his friends and acquaintances, he was saved the embarrassment of having to start by addressing himself to nobody. It takes a brave man to address himself to a hostile crowd, but a still braver one to pretend about the hostile crowd and just address himself.

For part of the way he got a small boy to carry the tub-thumping apparatus, and then a larger boy, as the first was left with displaced hips in Maddox Street.

At last they arrived. He had a considerable argument with a coloured gentleman about the exact spot on which he should carry out his operations. The coloured gentleman was of the opinion that he had an exclusive right to a certain piece of gravel with every modern view of the Marble Arch, and nothing would satisfy him but that Lord Downacre should go away very quickly off it and stay off. He had on a very dirty turban, and talked so fast, and his boots were too long and turned up at the ends, so Lord Downacre gave way

and ordered the big boy to place the tub and attachments further down. He came into contact with the Evidences of Christianity, Anti-Spirits, Black-Shirts, Beers and Light Wines, Poor Doggie, Poor Horsey, The Holy Book, Vivisection and The Skirted Convert of Mile

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End, but, eluding their grasp, climbed on to the apparatus and began. His voice made at first poor headway in that great safety-valve of Society, but by means of shouting he eventually had a most singular effect. *Surrounding speakers stopped to listen to him* — a thing never before known in Hyde Park since it was first open to the public. A Ninth Day Riparian actually clapped his hands.

“We must have mass production in this country! We must have babies!”

“You show me ’ow, Mister,” cried a coarse voice in the rear. But all the faithful friends and acquaintances cried, “Babies! Babies!”

“More babies! More babies!”

“More babies?” ruminated a modern Marie Antoinette on the outskirts; “why don’t they go to the pictures instead? What they need is sixpen’oth of darkness.”

Lord Downacre proceeded to anathematise all crude restraints and all subtle restraints placed upon the community’s activities either by convention or convictions, by countenance or cowardice. The war, he said, had proved that a good deal more could be accomplished in the direction indicated than was the

case at present, if only people tried. Parish authorities all over the country could testify to this. And they must

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try. If at first they didn't succeed, they must try, try, TRY AGAIN!

A policeman under a tree stirred uneasily,



*A policeman under a tree*

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trying to decide whether the speaker was inciting the crowd to any breach of the peace.



*"Very well," screamed the orator*

"Do you need encouragement?" shouted Lord Downacre.

"Yes!" bawled his friends facetiously.

"Very well," screamed the orator, feeling in

his pocket and pulling out a piece of paper. “Here it is. Everyone who writes to me at Candry House, Portman Square, will be supplied



free with this beautiful paper pattern of Baby’s First Undies.”

“Hooray!” shouted Ronnie Beeches.

“Us for the Undies!” echoed Blanyre, tears running down his cheeks.

“At present,” went on Lord Downacre, thumping his tub, “it is impossible to stand still in this

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world — we must make it impossible to move in it!”

“Hooray!” “Safety Pin!”  
“Hooray!” “Hooray!” “Safety Pin!” “Hoots!”

A lady, tall and determined, with a bitter expression on her pointed face, broke in at this moment upon the proceedings in order to call the attention of the company to the monstrous and iniquitous injustice of the London County Council in permitting to mere chairs what was not allowed to human beings.

“Look at them,” she said, “and tell me whether there is any reason why it should continue.”

They looked, and this is what they saw:

In every direction there were chairs in the most abandoned attitudes; chairs with their arms round each other, chairs in a heap together, chairs tangled about each other, chairs kneeling at each other’s feet — chairs — but enough!

“By Hek! you’re right!” answered Lord

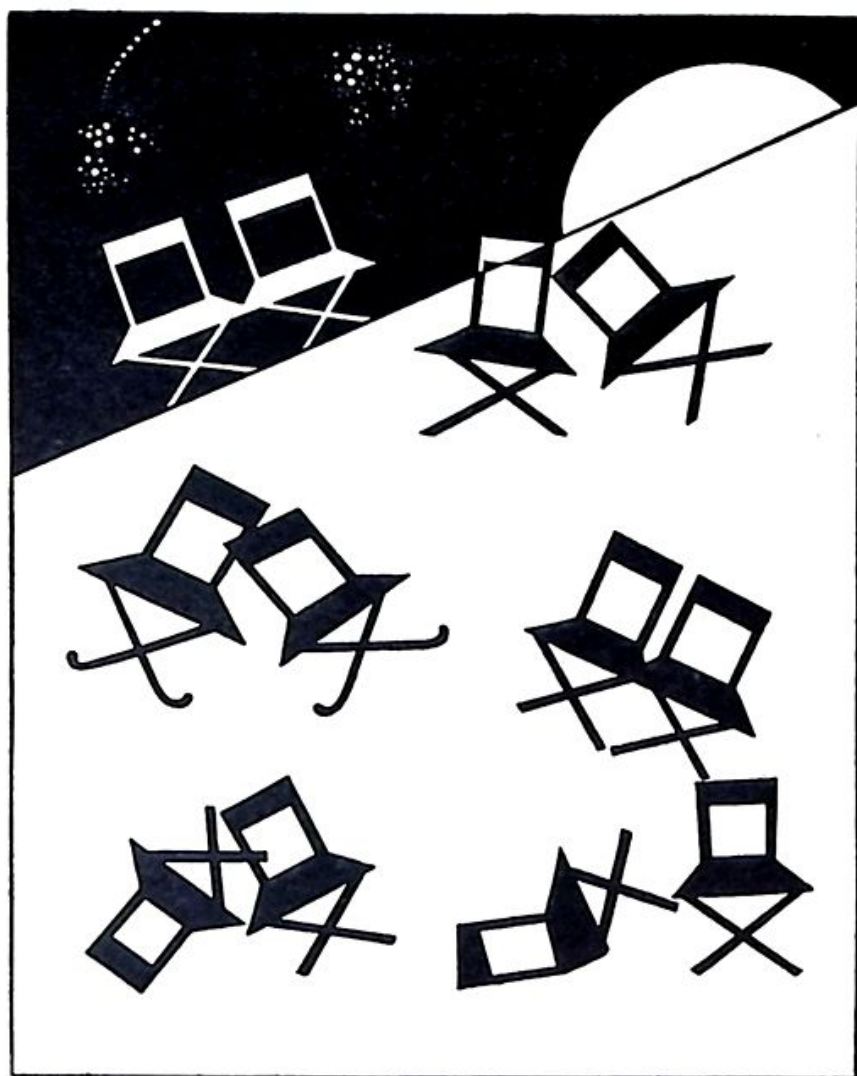
73



Downacre violently. “It is scandalous. We demand equal rights with chairs! The Park is ours, let us...”

But he never finished the sentence, for just then the policeman made up his mind and requested him to come quietly. But the audience melted away, looking into each other’s eyes.

Ain’t Nature grand?



*And this is what they saw*

## CHAPTER VII

HAVE you ever been inside a police court? Ever sat on a jury? Ever been arrested? Have you ever been abruptly conscious of the insignificance of personal assertion? Who was John Bright? Jack Hylton? Walter Pater? Elsa Lanchester? What is to Merrick a rebuke? What is a phagocyte?

I beg your pardon. For one moment I thought I was writing one of those Questionnaire books. It must be jolly to be a questionnaire writer. One just asks questions — anything — the first thing that comes into his head, and leaves the rest to his readers.

After the arrest, Lord Downacre was taken to a large brown building, with a blue lamp hanging over the door, and the crowd of people and dogs who had accompanied him were left outside, all except his friends Ronnie Beeches and Blanyre.

Behind the counter was another policeman writing out the prisoners' bills. He wore no helmet, and so had, for the moment, a curious

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resemblance to a man. The policeman who had brought the party began to explain the situation.

"This is a case of Moral Turpitude, Schedule A, Sergeant."

"Land Tax?" asked the other, with a glance at the prisoner and his pen poised.

"No, Chairs."

"What were the prisoner's words?"

The first policeman consulted a stout little black book.

“We demand equal rights with chairs. The Park is ours, let us...”

“What d’you mean, ‘The Park is ours, let us’?”

“That’s what ’e said.”

*Lord Downacre.* “You interrupted me.”

*P.C.* “Shut your face.”

*Lord Downacre.* “But you did.”

*Sergeant.* “Shut your face.”

*Lord Downacre.* “You must allow me to...”

*Chorus of Police.* “Shut your FACE.”

*Ronald Beeches (debonair and candid-eyed, stepping up to the counter).* “Have you any rooms tonight?”

*Sergeant (consulting ledger).* “Would it be for one night or longer, sir?”

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*Beeches.* “That would depend on how comfortable you made me.”

*Blanyre.* “SHUT YOUR FACE.”

*Beeches.* “I admit that I am wasting time. Sergeant, isn’t there a thing called Bail?”

*Sergeant.* “Do you wish to go it?”

*Beeches.* “I do.

I will go bail.

And in my own recognisances

Of One hundred pounds

To keep all breaches of the peace

I swear. In which endeavour may H.M.

Paymaster-General

Support and comfort

ME.”

*Sergeant.* "Done. Where's the dough?"

*Beeches (searching pockets in vain).* "Lo! So fa no do."

*Blanyre.* "Shall I write a cheque?"

And producing a long blue book he wrote "Pay the sum of one hundred pounds to bearer reading from right to left," and signed it.

"I'm not proud," he remarked, passing it across, "but I'll write my pretty name on the other side as well if you like, in block capitals, with the permanent address of the man next door to me, all in block capitals, and a Bachelor of Arts,

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manufacturer of synthetic umbrella handles or minister of religion shall also make their mark."

I know you are thinking that police sergeants cannot grant bail (or can they?). Well, anyway, this one was really a magistrate in disguise, as the real sergeant was out square-pushing; and as he lived just above in a little flat ornamented with pictures cut from the Sunday Press (caps., dear compositor), it was simple enough for him to slip down and look after the box office.

For a deep moment he looked at Lord Downacre, and then, chewing a brief red moustache, he said:

"Do you know, I simply cannot understand *why* you want to bail that thing out with good money. It looks more the sort of thing you'd bail out with a pail."

The "thing" blushed under its slightly handsome tan.

But the goodness of the money was a tender point with Blanyre. But he said nothing, for he knew as well as you or I that bail cannot be paid except by ready cash. So he laughed at the little joke and said, "Your Worship pleases," which the other took as a compliment.

Ronnie Beeches slipped an arm through that of George Candry, Lord Downacre, and remarked

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affectionately, "Well, you see it's this way. We must have him to-night, because we've arranged a lovely party with all the people from Mallord Street to Mecklenberg Square, and every Roaring Russian Ruin from 'off and' ski to 'vitch will be there."

The policeman who had personally conducted them thither stood aside, and they withdrew as the man behind the counter hurled one parting shot at them: "If you don't like it, it serves you right. You shouldn't come in our Park!"

Outside the people stamped and hooted, and Ronnie Beeches raised a hastily scrawled banner above their heads on which was written:

## WE WANT MORE MORAL TURPS!

The cry re-echoed down the street: "Moral Turps!"  
"Turps!"

"Moralt URPS."

"Murraltorpse."

"Amoralturpz.....zzzzzzzzzzz!"

Three ladies of the town, three uncrowned queans, surged forward, and seizing Lord Downacre rudely by the seat of his trousers hoisted him into the air. The crowd followed with laughter

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and cheers; it turned into Regent Street, and marched, ever gathering in size like a grey



*Ladies of the town*

snowball, towards Piccadilly Circus. A song rose from their lips — a rowdy, rude, rough, rich and ribald song, and the more they sang together,

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the more they swayed about. As they burst into the Circus they had got to the fourteenth verse, and Lord Downacre, altogether carried away by the occasion, was trilling in a high falsetto all the words he could catch, suiting them to the action as far as he could reach.

So we turned 'em up and smacked' em,  
Good and hearty, so we did!  
So we turned 'em up and smacked 'em  
till they roared;  
For they jilted Handy Andy  
For a stick of sugar candy,  
O! come into the Gar-den, Maud!"

"Hooray! Moral Turps!" shrieked the uncrowned queans.

The traffic which up to that moment had been going smoothly round and round the Circus in a sort of dazed rotatory trance, came to a standstill, and all the people on the tops of the buses stood up, howled back at the crowd in Regent Street, and the flower girls climbed on to the tops of taxis and some enthusiastic amateurs scaled the glass portico of the Monico and became entangled with the electric signs, going round and round on the wheels of the advertisement of the car, and blinking with the electric baby, and pouring out with the electric cocktail shaker, and

smoking with the electric Colonel. For five minutes pandemonium reigned.



“They were strong and they were fruity;  
They admired each other’s beauty,  
But they wouldn’t do their duty  
By the lads,  
**BY THE LADS;**  
So we turned ’em up and smacked ’em good  
and hearty,  
so we did:  
So we turned ’em up and smacked ’em till they  
roared!  
We’ll wear a purple feather,  
And all be boys together,  
O! come into the Gar-den, **MAUD!**”

With a deft movement Lord Downacre slid from his bearers, and seizing an arm of each of his friends shoved his way into the crowd, and after a good deal of elbowing bolted up Glasshouse Street into Beak Street, jumped into a taxi, and they were very soon whirring away towards Blanyre’s studio in the Mayfair Mews.

“Youth will be served,” observed the artist whimsically. “The only trouble is that we are late, and they may have started serving themselves and each other already.”

“It’ll be my fault,” said Ronnie Beeches; “I started you on this idea.”

Lord Downacre slapped him on the knee.

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“My dear old Ronnie!” he beamed, “you were right! There is no fault in question! Every word you said was right, and we will yet save the nation!”

The taxi drew up with a jerk.

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## CHAPTER VIII

THEY came into the room like men coming into warm water; slid gently in and floated, supported entirely by the texture of the atmosphere, both mental and physical. In the same way that a connoisseur can appreciate the more tangibly amusing side of coming up in one of the Underground Railway's excellent and charmingly decorated lifts with eighty-seven other persons, mostly of the other sex, so did our three friends appreciate the more salient and noticeable beauties of their young guests.

A boy once wrote to his father: "...but there are women *and* women; I refer only to the latter category..."

The room which was Blanyre's studio was filled almost entirely with the latter category. They had among them, it is true, a certain number of creatures in male attire. Some of these were what are called cyphers. The rest of the company were frankly syphons. It was altogether an oddly syphonous party.

Prince Vosvunceatoff — the man whose name sounded so silly in English, and which everyone thought had been as made up as his lips — was sitting in a corner, his black beard pointing towards the ceiling, his arm about a girl. They were both pretending a keen interest in a huge wind-swept German lady who was standing alone regarding half a fish and a ripple executed on Goose-skin by So Ting Ting, the Japanese artist whose name, though very well known in this country, also sounded as though it had been made up with the

idea of being funny. That is one of the chief characteristics of London's foreign circles. Their names are incredible, and whatever Weiniger and others may say, names do have a very strong influence. Hence the foreign population is itself incredible. They simply cannot be real people — for what are they doing in London?

Lord Downacre was destined on this particular evening to “assist at,” as the French say, the most improbable of incidents. He had been in the room about half-an-hour, and was slowly coming to the conclusion that as all these people were dream-like, it wouldn't matter what they did, or what one did with them. Having come to this happy mental juncture, and having

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behaved rather inconstantly by smiling into the eyes of five separate young women within two minutes of each other, and having permitted his left forefinger to glance briskly about, he was beginning to feel that here was a delicious friendly collection of people among whom no wish, no whim could come amiss nor not be never satisfied.

These maidens — if such they were (one could not tell at so brief an acquaintanceship) — seemed willing and kind, and surely if beauty be added, what more can be needed when the lady has a selection of gap-filling remarks which would pass for wit in almost any company? What indeed? — and at that moment Lord Downacre arrived at the back of the German lady who was still lost to the world, at one with the great Outer Beyond, where Mr. So Ting Ting had found inspiration for his Half Fish and Ripple. She was saying over and over again what sounded like “There is soup in

everything; there is soup in everything; there is soup in everything.”

Lord Downacre paused and listened carefully. Of course she could not possibly be saying that, but she looked so large — so broad in the beam — and so like all the German ladies one had ever met at parties — so emblematic, in fact, and it

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was not possible to believe that her yellow hair was *not* parted in the middle — that he felt a strange sympathy for her. This is rather strange, because as a rule fat people feel and speak of other fat people in the same way that Jews feel and speak of other Jews — a sort of loathing, tempered by contempt, as who should violently deny his own unpleasing reflection in a shaving mirror. Nevertheless he felt kindly for the German lady though her back was all he could see. And so, trying to connect up the idea of the picture at which she was looking and the idea which pervaded his mind, he asked:

“Do you know anything of the sexual life of fish, Fräulein?”

She revolved slowly in her long dress, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he resisted the temptation to give her a push, so close a resemblance had she to the toy figures whose wide and lead-weighted bases bring them abruptly to the perpendicular how ever far they fall.

“Ach! Ach!” she answered, with quick and Irishesque vivacity. “It is mud and water and water that has the chief effect on mud and water on their sexual life as on mud and all other sides of life; fish float, turn left and right so quickly without looking, that water and mud and weed

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and mud and WATER AND WEED and WATER AND FISH!!”

“But of *course*,” exclaimed Lord Downacre, enraptured.

“It is not important the fish, I mean the fish,” said Miss Stewart Montgomery Macalister (she had changed her name from Macdonald-Fergus by deed poll some years before). “The important thing is that I have brought a child with me to-night and lost it.”

Her companion cried out in delight, “A child? Magnificent. Let’s find it.”

Miss Macalister began to explain, but her explanations had a way of making matters rather less clear than they had been when one had not understood them at all.

“A child and some difficulty and expense and coming away to this party to-night has made a child and some child and silk and cotton I said some difficulty and so I bought some difficulty and silk and cotton and the child where is it?”

Blanyre, beautified by a turban of green silk, proffered just then two tall glasses of champagne.

“Is it possible,” he murmured, “that Miss Macalister, who has never been known to be at a loss, has lost something?”

Lord Downacre took the glass, and as he lifted it to his lips a bead of champagne flew out of it

and hit him on the eyeball. He took a step backward, lost his balance and sat down heavily on someone. It was Muriel Pelladower.

“Oh!” she gasped.

“I am too heavy to sit on your lap, my dear Muriel,” he beamed, moving himself to the other half of the prayer mat on which she was seated. “Have my handkerchief.”

She mopped. He mowed. They fell into desultory talk, and Charles James, whose position as temporary Squire of lady was now not worth the words it was expressed with, rose to his feet and slouched over to the buffet.

“What do you think of all this?” asked a voice.

“Oh — sick of one and half-a-dozen of the sexes,” came the reply.

Blanyre tried to be helpful to Miss Macalister.

“What did you say you’d lost, dear lady?”

“A child, you see, a child.”

“Two of them?”

She shook her head mournfully. “No, only one, but only one and with difficulty and here coming, but only one.”

“Is *that* it?” he suggested, pointing at Muriel.

She shook her head. It appeared that she meant an actual child of tender years. They moved about in the smoky half light, asking for news of it.

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“Heard a noise of a child about here?”

“No.”

“Do you mind getting up, my dear chap? — you may be sitting on a child.” Not there either.

They looked behind doors and under tables, Blanyre genially leading the way, and the stately symbolic figure of Miss Macalister bringing up the rear (which he had carelessly left behind). They stumbled hither and thither — “there’s soup in everything.” All at once she clapped

a hand to her round forehead and said in a husky voice that she remembered having left it in the taxi.

Heavens! What would happen to it? *Whose* child was it anyway? It was, she replied, bridling, her own. How careless.

“It’s all right, you know,” he tried to comfort her; “it will be taken to Scotland Yard, and you can claim it. It will be put all among the umbrellas and suit-cases — or maybe it will have to go among the grand pianos, statues and garden rollers that the absent-minded have left in trains. Anyway you’ll get it back.”

She seemed relieved at this and murmured again what sounded like “there’s soup in everything.” There was a chuckle from the darkness near them. A man’s voice said, “And it’s the same with dogs, because they have a sense of citizenship, though not highly developed.”





*The party*

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“*I know,*” replied Muriel’s voice.

Two Americans clinked their glasses, toasting each other in warm water. A leg, silk encased, drew itself out of a beam of light, like a snake into undergrowth, and was gone.

“I’ll get you something to drink,” said the artist hospitably.

The room had become quite dreamlike by this time. Figures loomed up out of the fog — familiar figures, curiously out of drawing; voices lapped like waves upon a shore of polished boards; glasses clinked like the bells of submerged churches; girls’ laughter for the surf, men’s for the rumble of pebbles slewing back in its retreating wash. Blanyre came on Lord Downacre looking a little crestfallen and alone.

“I have a feeling,” said that usually jovial person, “that these people here are not really interested in the birth-rate.”

“What does that matter?” answered his friend sympathetically. “It is curious how often people affect quite markedly a thing in which they are not interested.”

There was a muffled knocking somewhere.

“I’ll go and see who it is,” said Lord Downacre.

The other nodded and went off in another direction on urgent private business.

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Lord Downacre found his way to the door, opened it, and went down the little passage to the front door that looked on to the Duke’s house and the dung-heap. This he opened, and just outside in a confused group he found a large lady who closely resembled a dead cab horse, a small man without hair and a child of four.

“We have come,” said the cab-horse lady, “to bring back this infant.”

“Come in, come in. We’ve been looking everywhere for it.”

They formed into an undisciplined procession and marched into the studio. No one took much notice of

their arrival, except to draw in their legs a bit. Just as Downacre was closing the door, two people slipped past and out into the street. A man's voice said, "I think that to stroll about Mayfair in moonlight makes one view these things in quite a different light."

*"I know,"* came a girl's voice.

The procession wound its way into the centre of the room and came to a standstill underneath the only beam of white light.

"Blanyre!"

The artist appeared, with Sir Walter Tank, the sculptor, on one arm, and Vere Woodenn, the other sculptor, on his other arm. They toasted the new arrivals.

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"Where is the mother?"

A murmur went round among the nearer guests.

"Where is the mother?"



*"I know," came a  
girl's voice*

Miss Macalister came slowly forward, pushing her long dress out strongly with each step. Lord Downacre bowed to her and waved a hand towards the child, who was standing, fast asleep, with his tiny arms straight down at his sides.

The lady like a cab horse picked up the child,

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and with a vague memory of some other scene of the same kind in her mind, held him out and said, "There now!" very much as a king once held out a child to the people of Wales.



*Like a Wyndham  
Lewis group*

Miss Macalister took the child and said nothing. They stood there rather stiffly like a Wyndham Lewis group, for a perceptible space, and Ronnie Beeches, with a sudden warm appreciation of the scene, whispered to Lord Downacre:

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“George, this is exactly like a page from one of her own books.”

Lord Downacre’s mind revolved once more and came round to the Idea.

Yes, that was it; one of her own books. Symbolic of what? And meaning, if anything, something; but who could say? Impressive and abstract; a pattern. Here was

his opportunity. This had been enacted to give him the right atmosphere for converting the company. Strangers brought a child to a maiden; who claimed it and received it. He smiled. Now he would go round, gradually, and have a quiet convincing word with each of the somnolent couples in that deep long room; and the nation would be saved.

“Can’t you see what a wonderful thing this is?” he whispered back to Ronnie Beeches. “Isn’t it worth having come back from Washington — even though you did not fly the Atlantic — in order to witness this pageant, and give me a great truth?”

Ronnie nodded. It was useless now to regret his rashness. Where it would lead he had no idea. George was a man — as you have heard — who could have done anything he liked — and yet did nothing until someone else liked.

Blanyre turned towards the lady cab horse

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and asked, “May we know to whom Miss Macalister is indebted?”

“Mrs. Collingdale is my name,” said the cab-horse lady, “and this is my husband. We are only too pleased to have been of any service. Who is the mother?”

“Hush, that is Miss Macalister, the verproseist.”

The little man with no hair leaned confidentially towards Blanyre, and the two sculptors leaned confidentially towards him.

“To tell you the truth, we rather wanted to see what a Bohemian Gathering was like,” he said hoarsely; “one always thought that they were so *abandoned*.”

“I believe they are,” replied Blanyre. “Have you been to one? I never have.”

“Isn’t this one?” The little No Hair sounded disappointed.

“No; I’m afraid this is merely a rather drunken party. Bohemia is more in the W.C. direction; that is to say, West Central.”

“But who are all these people?”

“Mostly Americans who have come to England to cure themselves of the drink habit, and Russian stockbrokers. Those four people in tussore silk djibbahs and half-Wellington boots, lying on cushions behind you, kissing each other on the ear, are Doubelfolta Vantageinski, Monsieur

101 ALL CHILDREN MUST BE PAID FOR  
 Rubisnozinit, Mademoiselle Tatiana Deuceka  
 and Fifteen Love—all stockbrokers. They are  
 kissing each other on the ear in confirmation  
 of some bargain or other. Keen business  
 people the Russians! Have some  
 champagne."



The little man perked up at this and soon was struggling  
 to lift a Jeroboam of champagne nearly as big as himself  
 in order to tip it into a glass held out by his host.  
 (All right, Miss Binder, I don't mind—push all  
 these lines up as far as you like and jam your  
 picture in if you *must*!)

But I'm not going to draw a picture  
 just here, Mr. Sieveking

But Lord Downacre was looking a little dismayed.  
 The name Collingdale had an unpleasant cold sound to



him. The very word was like a knell. He frowned, put his face straight and asked:

“Is it possible that Claire Collingdale is a relation of yours?”

The cab-horse lady brightened.

“Dear Claire. Do you know her? She is my husband’s sister. Such a dear girl and always doing *so* much Good. She’s engaged to Lord Downacre, and has such fine feelings that she has persuaded him to give up his title.”

Ronnie Beeches whistled softly, looked sideways at his poor friend, and then went quickly away over the strewn bodies to where Blanyre and group were heaving the drink about.

“We must marry George to somebody to-night,” he said. “The Committee Woman — his sister-in-law (in a way) does really mean business — and I fancy he won’t be safe for another day after this afternoon’s activities in the Park!”

“You don’t mean it!”

“But I do. Who shall it be?”

Blanyre thought. Then he exclaimed, “Where’s that girl Muriel?”

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Ronnie looked round.

“I can’t see her. She’s had a good deal of variety to-night one way and another, and I fancy that her latest swain must have taken her off to see his pictures or his poems — or his stamp album or something.”

“We must find her.”

Another search was started. A clock struck four. The Brothers Karamazov seized it and threw it out of window.

All this time Miss Macalister had been standing like a Druid with the child in her arms. Her lips moved ever and again as though she were repeating a spell. The cab-horse lady was saying, "I am so delighted to find myself at a real studio at night. Living in Kensington as we do, we have never had the opportunity before. But when the taxi driver told us where he had put you down, we knew the dear child must be yours. I cannot *tell* you what immense satisfaction it gives us to discover that such right and proper feeling exists among the circles whom we had always misjudged. The question of one's duty to the State in the matter of the future generation is one which is closest to our hearts, as it is to my husband's dear sister Claire. All felicitations, dear Mrs. Macalister."

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The other lady's only response to this was "*Miss Macalister.*"

The cab-horse lady's perturbation was covered and washed aside, for at that moment a great wave of excitement swept over the room. Lord Downacre had been sitting for a long while wrapped in the charms of a young woman whose face he couldn't see, telling her that the one thing he knew to be right was that she should have a baby as soon as conveniently possible — that the nation's fate was at stake — that the Japanese were multiplying — the Chinese adding — the Americans subtracting and the French dividing — that when all was said and done, England would never be safe until every square inch was occupied by a fine, rosy, breathing human being — that, in short, she *must* have a baby...

And the girl had been laughing at him and saying that he was very nice, in fact too sweet, when all at once he

had been swung to his feet by Ronnie Beeches and Blanyre, who cried together:

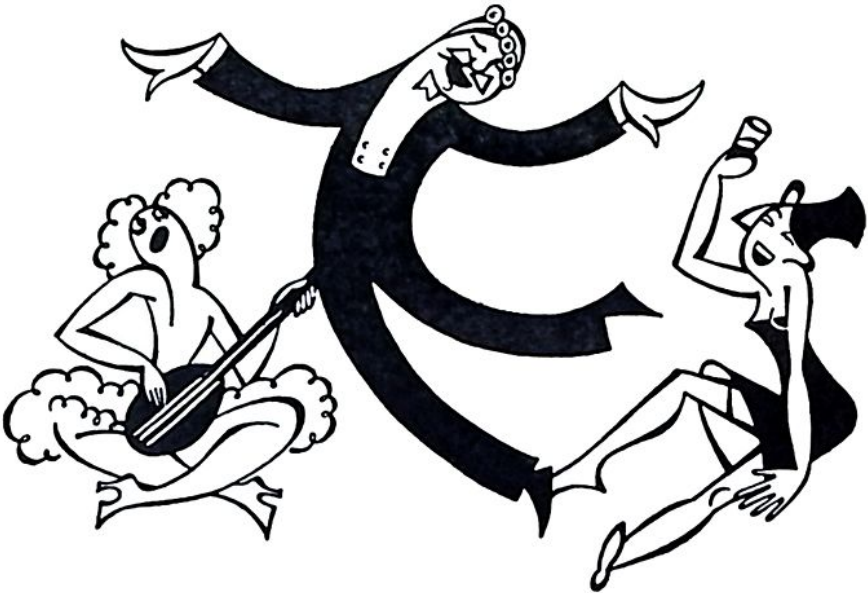
“George must play with the girls.”

Someone placed a wreath of flowers on his head, a space was cleared, and in a moment he was dancing with a girl in a top-hat whose long white legs twinkled like marble in the beam of light. She seemed to have on very little

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else but the top-hat; indeed she looked quite charming.

Everything began to go round — the champagne was getting into the air. Mats and rugs were rolled up and thrown aside, and very soon everyone



*George shall play with the girls*

with the exception of Miss Macalister and Mrs. Collingdale, the cab-horse lady, were whirling about in a wild rout; balalaikas twanging, guitars and ukeleles

thudding. In the midst of it, two people came in unobserved, letting in a stray patch of daylight as they opened the door. The man — apparently not the same as he who had gone out two hours earlier — was saying,

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“I am so glad you admire Nimp’s work. You are very like a tree yourself. And trees are so expressive!”

“I *know*,” said the girl’s voice.

They danced against Ronnie Beeches, who had somehow got into a bathing costume and was executing a kind of Black Bottom of his own invention with a slim girl in white tights.

“Ah!” said Ronnie. “So you’ve come back just in time. You are to be married to George.”

“I *know*,” she said.

“Now, at once.”

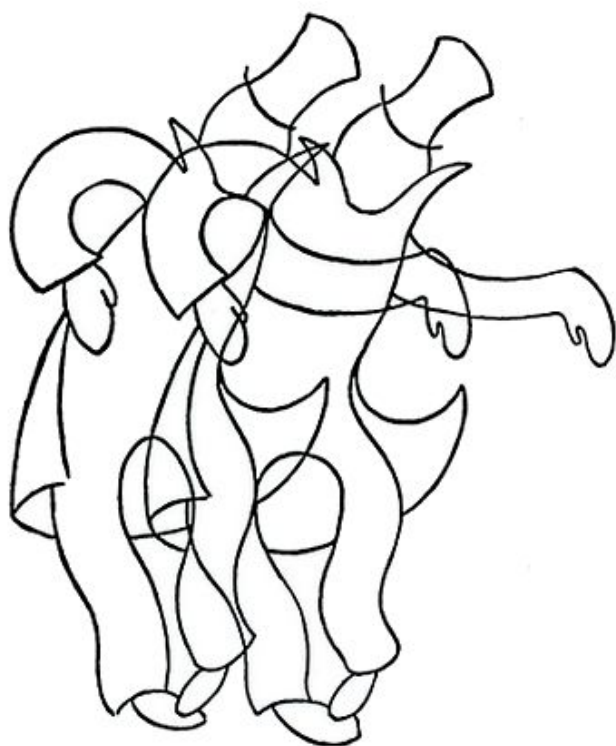
He seized her hand and dragged her across the room. But it *was* too late.

Lord Downacre had come to the conclusion

that he

had converted enough of the party and should now go home to prepare his intensive campaign, and his step

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had taken him out into the Mews and along a number

direction in which he walked, filled with a  
large prophetic affatus.  
of streets in the early morning light, and this is the



## CHAPTER IX

NOW you find yourself in the same hall where first you made the acquaintance of George Candry, Lord Downacre, that decent, good-natured young man, somewhere in the early thirty-sixes — just the kind of fellow who is one of Nature's bachelors; with all the necessary attributes for the making of a wholly admirable life. Here, too, you saw the Honourable Claire Collingdale in the midst of a crowded Committee day.

But the scene is rather different this morning. All the furniture is piled up together on one side, and all the pictures have been taken down. In their places now hang notices. Over the door is one:

BUREAU FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF NATURE.

Near it another :

*YOU PRODUCE THE BABY;  
WE DO THE REST.*

Further along the wall were some more, printed in large black type.

*GODFATHER'S DEN.*

and

**WOMEN ! DO YOUR DUTY !**

This chapter's curtain rises to discover Lord Downacre (the young man who might have done what is sometimes called "anything") arranging numerous silver mugs, spoons, and cards on a large side table. As he works he hums softly to himself:

"How doth the little mother  
Improve the shining hour;  
She brings once more another,  
She brings once more another..."



Absent-mindedly wandering on, he picks up a mug here and sets it down there with the air of a child arranging a game of "shop."

A girl appeared in the doorway; it was Muriel Pelladower. She came forward, paused, hesitated, started to speak, corrected herself, and then with a great effort struggled out of her blush-bag and said:

"Good-morning, Lord Downacre. I found the front door standing open, so I just came straight in."

He smiled at her a little vacantly.

"Yes — yes, of course. The front door will, from now on, always be open, so that none of them shall have any doubt of which house it is, nor have any scruples against entering."

Muriel looked a little puzzled. "None of *them*?"

But he was too wrapped in his own occupation to listen. He handed her a silver mug and stood back to look, head on one side, like a producer at a rehearsal. He made a gesture with his right hand as of one who picks a flower out of the air.

"Good! Good! Hold it! Hold it!"

"I am!" she cried agitatedly.

"I mean the pose. Oh! No, no. You must have a baby too."

She blushed becomingly.

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"Wha — what did you say?"

"You *must*. A baby. Here's one for you."

He seized a cushion from the floor and placed it gently in her arms.

“There now! That’s right. Madame, I do you honour. In these days of decimation and decrepitude you have nobly performed your highest function...”



*"You have nobly  
performed your  
highest function"*

He paused; but luckily for his happiness did not look round. Otherwise he would have seen in the doorway his sister-in-law (in a way) Claire, with her brother and his wife, the dead-cab-horse lady, and behind them again, Ronnie Beeches. None of these spoke. They seemed fascinated by the scene before them, dumb, incredulous.

Lord Downacre pirouetted and continued his speech.

“Yes — you have nobly performed your highest function. I have great pleasure in becoming its — her — or — ahem — should it be *his* (?) Godfather. This beautiful christening mug is hereby presented to the child, and once a year up to the age of fourteen we will present him and you with a useful gift, either of cash and clothes, or tea and teeth-brushes.”

Muriel, who on this occasion was incapable of saying that she “knew,” merely asked helplessly:

“Why tea?”

“Why not?”

“But — but where are they all?”

The young man laughed triumphantly. “Where they are at present is no matter. Who knows but what, in less time than it takes for them to walk here — no, that’s impossible — but in

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less time than something or other, they will be here!”

Claire would have intervened, but Ronnie Beeches was too quick for her.

“Hullo, my dear George!” he bellowed. “What became of you last night? We were just arranging to fix you up when you disappeared. And what are you up to now?”

His friend seemed a little taken aback for a moment and then recovered.

“Oh, nothing. Just a little idea of mine. I’m carrying out your theory, Ronnie. They’ll all be here any

moment now.”

“And who are ‘they’?”

“Didn’t you read the notice outside?”

“You mean the one on the front door?”

Lord Downacre nodded.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes. Let the Coming Generation Come. And let it come quickly! There’s a good slogan for you!”

Ronnie Beeches frowned.

“But that might mean anybody,” he said.

“Pre-cisely,” chuckled the other.

Muriel stood silently abashed, with her cushion and mug, and in the doorway the group were rigid in mystification.

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“But,” objected Ronnie, “there won’t be enough...”

“Mugs?” said Lord Downacre quickly.

Ronnie nodded.

“Oh, I’ve lots and lots,” smiled the huge little boy, waving his hands towards the table. “And when they run out there are spoons and — and — when they run out there are fair words...”

“When they run out, you’ll have to run out too. How magnificent you are, my dear George! Who but you could have conceived such an idea! And who but you would have ventured to put it into practice!”

“Who but *you* and Muriel,” echoed the other, “would have come here of your own free wills to help me distribute! Got you there!”

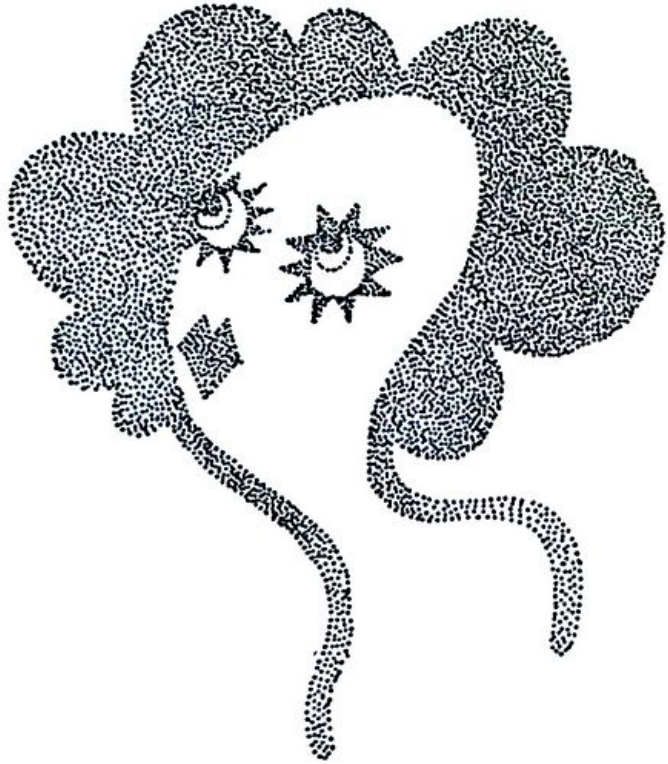
The late first secretary to the British Embassy at Washington shook his head. “Anything in the world

but that, my old cabbage! Age cannot what d'ye-call-it, nor Custom what's-its-name your infinite thingumajig — *but* there comes a moment, a well-defined moment; and at that moment I am obliged to check my almost ungovernable impulse to do anything you ask of me.”

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Muriel Pelladower said faintly, “*I know,*” and dropped her cushion with a soft flop. It seemed to bring the group in the doorway its cue.

Claire surged forward like a battleship being



—*said faintly*  
“*I know*”

launched, head erect, skirts bellying out like two waves.

“What are you doing? What in the world have you — are you mad? George! How...”

But her sister-in-law (in fact) laid a restraining hand on her arm, and in her best Kensington

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manner remarked, “Claire, my dear girl, will you not present me to your fiancé?”

Claire’s face seemed to break into a thousand pieces. Her eyes closed, and she turned away.

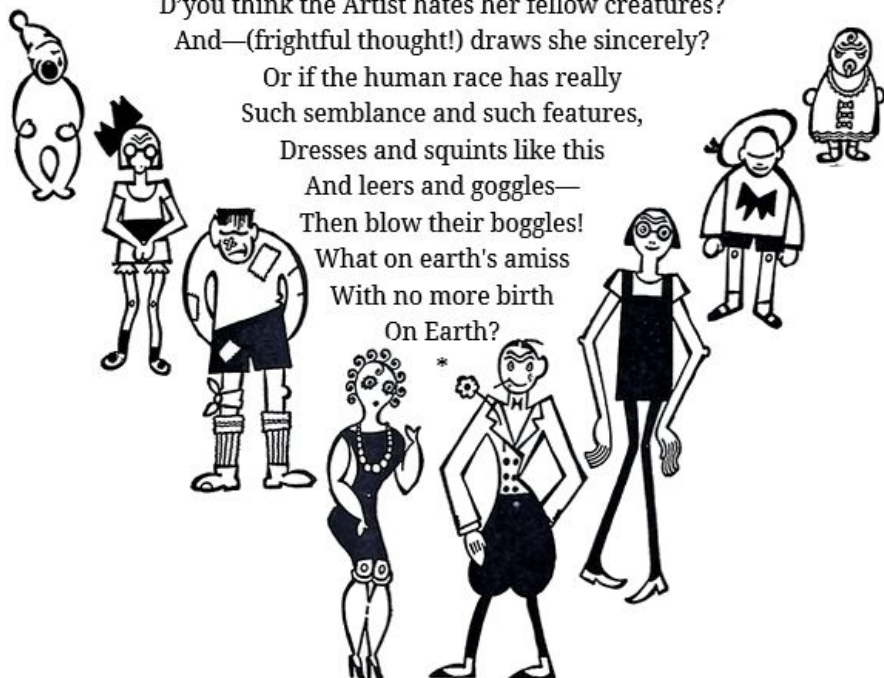
Little No Hair smiled broadly, showing two rows of faultless false teeth. He winked deeply and long at his wife like a ventriloquist’s dummy. The cab-horse lady flowed round Lord Downacre, delighted and tremulous, aged forty-three.

“Oh, Lord Downacre — I will introduce myself. I am Mrs. Collingdale of Prince of Wales Gate — such a *nace* neighbourhood, with street music utterly forbidden. I am more delighted than I can say at the approaching event, especially as you are one who stands alone in these dreadful days — alone. High principles and a consciousness of your duty to the State — these are the things for which you stand. I and William here have eleven offspring. My dear mother, however, still holds the title of champion for the county, with fourteen.”

“Heedless yet of Stopes and Penn,  
Of Malthus and of other men,”

hummed Ronnie to himself; but the lady’s flow was unstemmed.

DID IT?—COULD THEY?—ARE WE REALLY?...  
 Reader! I'm with you there! — I make no Stricture—  
 But somehow, you know, I don't quite like this picture...  
 D'you think the Artist hates her fellow creatures?  
 And—(frightful thought!) draws she sincerely?



Or if the human race has really  
 Such semblance and such features,  
 Dresses and squints like this  
 And leers and goggles—  
 Then blow their boggles!  
 What on earth's amiss  
 With no more birth  
 On Earth?

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“You have ideals!” she cooed. “I will see to it that  
 all the women in my District — for of course I have a  
 District to visit — shall come regularly.”

Lord Downacre bowed.

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## CHAPTER X

MURIEL crept to Ronnie Beeches' side as if for protection. All this chatter and back-handed conversation bewildered her. She was accustomed to being the subject of all conversation and neither liked nor understood any other kind of talk. Ronnie (every button doing its duty) casually put his arm about her. She was the sort of girl about whose waist all men put their arms as naturally as one leans over a gate. She would have been surprised if they didn't.

She watched Claire's retreating form with an uncomprehending eye. Apparently something that that queer-looking woman had said had upset her. But how or when or what about were all beyond her understanding. Ronnie Beeches chuckled and looked down at his armful. He squeezed it playfully. Then he turned to Lord Downacre and said with a twinkle in his voice, "Oh, yes, my excellent George; you have ideals! Ideals!"

Lord Downacre, refusing to have his leg pulled,

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responded in the same tone, though maybe a fraction off the note.

"You're right! I look forward and up. Excelsi — what's-its-name! Je pense à l'avenir. Aux millions des enfants — er — about to be — about to be... Is French one of your strong points, Muriel?"

The girl shook her head. "I'm afraid not, George," she said. She had reached the Christian name at last,



safe in the protection of another man's arm. "Verbs are so difficult."

"But so like life, don't you think?" exclaimed Beeches. "So irregular, don't you know!"

Lord Downacre frowned.

"I am wont to be born. Or is it — I won't be born?"

"That certainly sounds the more likely of the two."

Cudgelling his brain, George went on: "Preterite: I bore. I don't — er... Imperfect: I was born. Ah! Imperfect I was born. Very true. A solemn thought that. Participle: Borning. No, no. I *must* be wrong. That only sounds like someone with a cold. 'Good-bordig, Biss Jodes.'"

Ronnie released his armful. "Don't be an ass, George!"

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The Honourable Mrs. Collingdale, the Cab-horse and her husband, looking a little perplexed, had by this time made up their minds to go and find Claire. When they did she would not look at them. Never, never would she forgive such a piece of treachery! She was on the telephone, desperately trying to get hold of Mr. Mantis. He, if no one else in the world, would be able to drive out this devil from her brother-in-law's mind. She waved her brother and his egregious wife away.

A footstep sounded in the hall. Turning, Ronnie Beeches saw Blanyre, the artist.

"Really this is preposterous," he cried; "there's that man again. When one thinks one has seen the last of him for ever, one opens the door early in the morning

and finds that he is delivering the milk for the milkman.”

Blanyre stole in conspiratorially. “George,” he whispered, “there’s a crowd assembling outside! What have you done?”

“Hooray!”

Lord Downacre galumphed to the window, but the sound of voices from the telephone brought him back.

“And a frâcas in the lobby,” said Blanyre hoarsely. “There’s a lady out there — I should give her fifty-two (and even then beat her) — talking to someone who is blowing down a

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telephone. They don’t seem pleased with each other.”

Ronnie Beeches took his arm, and putting his mouth to the other’s ear, he said, “Can’t you see? It’s all right; George is saved. All we have to do is to marry him to Muriel here.”

“But she is — isn’t she?”

“Not that I know of. Or perhaps you mean unwilling?”

“On the contrary. Well, we’ll see about that. Though one wife hardly seems likely to meet *this* sort of occasion.”

He looked round at the notices. “I say, George, I think I shall start a sort of literary dressmaking establishment on these lines. In my window I will have a notice founded on your formula. How about ‘Customers’ own plots made up’? or ‘Ladies’ and Gents’ Summer Verses. Outsize Novels always in

stock. Jokes ready to wear or made to measure!’ Eh, how’s that?”

Ronnie laughed.

“I think you should have over the door a sign saying, ‘Genuine Misquotations.’”

“I will, Ronnie! I will,” promised the artist, carelessly throwing his arm about the slim waist of Muriel Pelladower. “Many men will lead you to the altar, Muriel.”

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“I *know*,” she said, flashing.

“But it will be the altar of Bacchus.”

“I *know*,” she said.

For a time they idled there; the morning wore on and the hour of luncheon approached. Every now and then some new suggestion for the Bureau for the Encouragement of Nature occurred either to Ronnie or Blanyre, and they gave it to Lord Downacre, who made a note of it.

All at once Claire came back, tall, flushed, desperate, with a sandy-haired, yellow-looking person in spats, firmly held by the hand. In her wake came the Kensington relations, anxious to miss nothing. She led her creature up to Lord Downacre and said:

“George, this is Mr. Mantis, the Honorary Secretary of the Birth Control League.”

The two men shook hands coldly.

“Sir,” said Lord Downacre, “I hope you come with good news.”

“I am deeply pained,” replied Mr. Mantis, “to see all these reactionary notices on your walls. You cannot

be aware of the terrible effect you will have on the community. Already there are women coming from every direction. The Square is blocked at the Orchard Street end!”

Lord Downacre’s face wreathed in smiles.

“Good! Good! I notified all the Parish

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Authorities in the W. and S.W. Postal Districts this morning *and* the Labour Bureau. By tonight the Movement will be well started. I was so convinced by the arguments of my friend, Mr. Ronald Beeches, here — allow me to introduce you — that I am going to receive all the new mothers within five miles of this house and give them mugs and an extra godfather. Small beginning you know. Encourage ’em, and all that sort of tiling. All children must be paid for. We will help pay. You bring the baby and...”

Ronnie Beeches’ ribald voice interrupted: “We buy it, eh? Cash Mug Deposit. Then a spoon and a fair word. Bought by instalments. Slightly soiled second-hand baby for sale. As new!”

Lord Downacre whirled about — as far as one of his build was able — and his bulging eye was full of fanatical fire.

“Don’t attempt to be funny, Ronald. This is a subject upon which you feel no less strongly than I do. When one, be it but for an instant, released from the immediate details of everyday experience — from the petty inconvenience of the moment — when one, I say, turns one’s mental searchlight penetratingly on to the

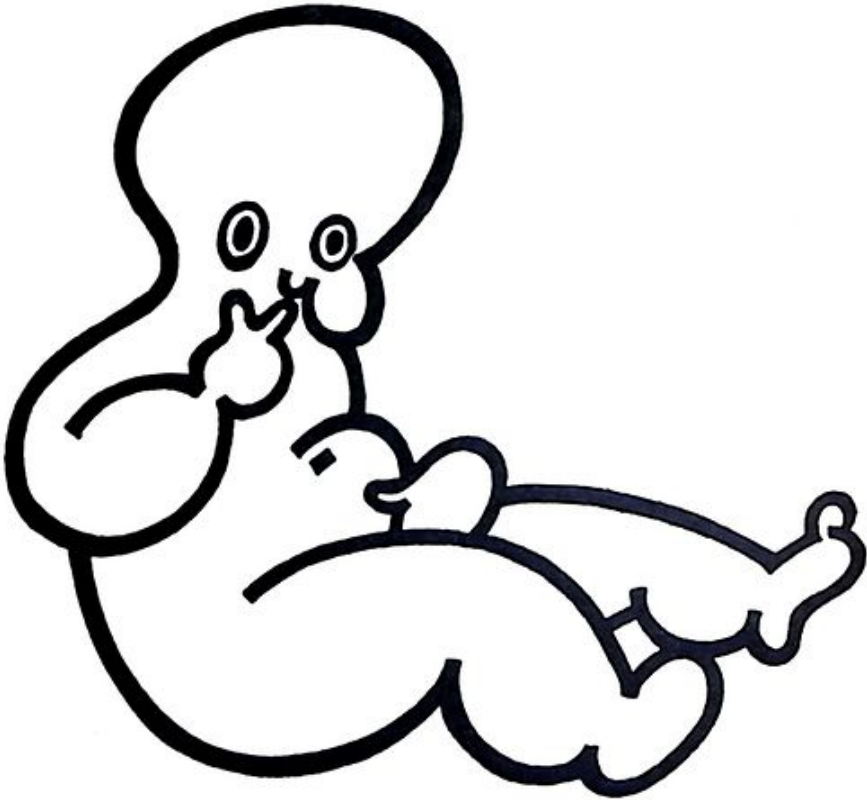
Czecho-Slovako — Bolshio — Armenio — Turkovik questions...”

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“Don’t forget the Argentines, and the Portuguese, and the Greeks!” chimed in Blanyre.

But the other was launched. “Think for a moment!”

Mr. Mantis stuck his thumbs into his waistcoat. “I know, I know! You might as well say, think of the General Post Office! Think of the Nurse Cavell Monument! Think of the number you first thought of! But MUGS! Bah!”



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*Ronnie.* “They always say ‘Pshaw’ in books.”

*Mantis (retreating in order to jump better):* “Pshaw, then.”

*Lord Downacre (bursting).* “If you people cannot treat this matter with the seriousness which is due to it I shall have to ask you to leave the — Bureau. This is a most critical morning, not only for me, but for the whole nation.”

*Ronnie beeches and Blanyre (together):* “We will be good! We’ll play it your way.”

Mr. Mantis, who had steadily been growing larger and larger as though his soul were a kind of bicycle pump and was blowing him up, pursed up his mouth and spoke with that icy and embittered concentration which comes to a man who has nearly reached the point when he sees red.

“May I ask exactly what you think is going to happen here? Do you know that the house is practically surrounded? I read the notice outside without quite grasping the import of it.”

“If you look at the notices on *these* walls,” said Ronnie Beeches, “you will see that we are not only dealing with import, but export!”

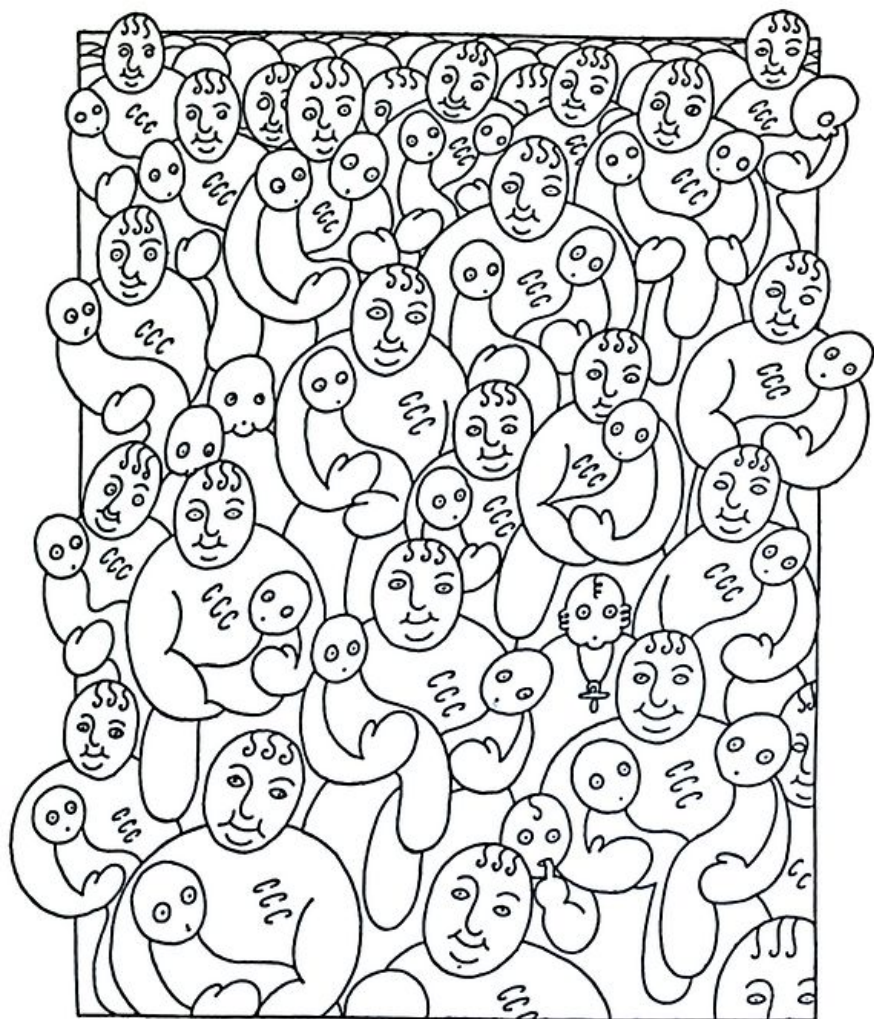
The Cab-horse frowned. “I am sure that Lord Downacre has done a great and noble act.”

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“Ah,” murmured that individual, self-consciously, “Am about to have done, dear lady. Come to the window!”

He led her to the balcony, the others following at their heels.

It was a truly impressive scene. Portman Square was packed with women as far as the eye could see. The road in front of the house and both of those turning off it were jammed tight with females of every description, and all of them holding babies. The air was full of a vast sound — the combined notes of five thousand whining babies and five thousand soothing mammas. A sort of community-whining. That there was no conductor with a megaphone and a white sweater left the observer with a sense of something wanting. Through the trees in the Square garden further masses of people were visible. Here and there a policeman was attempting to move them on. Over in Orchard Street three mounted police were gently edging the mothers forward, but all that happened was that there was a general movement round the Square, and those who had been in a good position just before the house were swayed away from it protesting, scowling and waving their free hands. The babies whined all the while,



*As far as eye could see*

and their voices rose up in waves over the roofs of the houses...

As the party appeared on the balcony a confused shouting greeted them.



Ah !

There ! Look there !

Move along  
please !

**THERE 'E IS !**

Move along please !  
Come now—move along !

**Mugs !**

What about the . . .

Baby !

Mug !

Mug !

Godfawther !

'Ere's baby !

**BABY !**

'Ush, dear !

'Ush, dear !

'USH, blast yer !

# **WILL YOU 'USH !**

The party on the balcony felt rather small and helpless, but made a brave show of light-heartedness.

“Isn't it wonderful?” exclaimed Lord Downacre. “Claire will be absolutely biffed by this. Her rotten Committees — I beg your pardon, Mr. Mantis — but

do for a second glance at the formidable array of females that my manifesto has gathered together.”

“You can call babies from the vasty deep!” laughed Beeches.

“Aha!” cried his friend, “and lo, they come when I do call!”

Mr. Mantis, breathing rather hard, took a step behind Lord Downacre.

“This is ghastly,” he muttered.

“In a moment it will begin!”

“What will?”

“*What* will?” echoed Lord Downacre. “In the next war, when the re-populated globe rises against itself, or some of it rises against the rest, and when the very kennel of our watch-dog stands empty on our coast through lack of foresight; when the pram manufacturing industry has fallen into decay through lack of demand; when the import of artificial teats has entirely ceased; when...”

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“Go on,” said Mr. Mantis, sarcastically, but Ronnie and the others shooshed him down.

“When, in fact, the grass has not only grown under our feet, but all over the country; when the Germans, the Americans, the Montenegrins, the Chinese, have filled their countries to bursting point, and we — *WE* have no one left at all in the place except two newspaper Overlords and a Bishop, blushing for each other’s improper thoughts — then — *THEN*, I ask you, what will happen?”

“Then swarming hordes will come.”

“And with one awful rush...”

“You can see for yourself.”

They faced each other on the balcony above the uproar of the street, and with His voice now on its topmost note Lord Downacre shouted, “I mean that I am going to encourage the people of England to increase and multiply till you *cannot* see the country for faces! To-day, here, before you, you see a small but worthy beginning.” He waved his hand towards the five thousand mothers.

In reply came a confused mutter of many voices. They stepped back into the room, Lord Downacre in the middle of his little group, beaming this way and that as pleased as a successful Parliamentary candidate among his supporters.

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“They will come in one by one,” he went on. Beeches shook his head.

“They will *not*, ” he said; “but a hundred at a time.”

“Will come in,” persisted the other, “and be given one of these christening mugs you see here. I have promised to be godfather to all of them. I may yet save Old England!”

Claire’s faint voice broke in at this point. “You cannot mean that all those women, George, are coming in here?”

“You should be proud, Miss Collingdale,” said Ronnie Beeches, “that he is carrying out so nobly the principles you expressed in that speech of yours

yesterday to the Association for Combatting the Fall of the Birth-rate.”

“What!” cried Mr. Mantis, turning on her in a fury. “Do you mean to tell me, Madam, that you were not sincere in your speech to *us* yesterday? Has the Birth Control League been humbugged?”

“Sir! How dare you?” Again the unfortunate woman was beaten, thrown back, confused and stammering. It was no good. She had made her Committees, but she could not lie on them.

Now came the moment when all the concentrated

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venom in Mr. Mantis rose to the surface and burst out in a red-hot stream.

“Sir — Lord Downacre — listen to me for an instant, I beg, just one instant before you let these women in. You cannot, *CANNOT*, know what it will mean. Surely when you look around you, you cannot but be aware that there are *too many* people in the world?”

Ronnie Beeches was heard to mumble that it *had* seemed to him like that occasionally.

On went Mr. Mantis, his red moustache on end like a cat’s fur. “All national and international trouble has been caused by the *over* population of the world. The numbers have grown to such a pitch that something has simply got to happen. You had the war! Now there is not enough work, not enough food — I might almost say not enough *air* for them all. And yet people like you, Lord Downacre — people of intellect, judgment,

enthusiasm and energy — keep screaming for more and more and MORE!”

Ronnie Beeches was pale with suppressed laughter.

“Stop,” he said firmly. “I know that what you are going to say is a piece of the most flagrant sophistry. For two pins...”

“And is it not lucky,” flashed Mr. Mantis,

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“that no one on the spot ever offers those two pins?”

“If you really want...”

“I WILL BE HEARD,” retorted the other fiercely. “We must go the other way. There is only one cure! Keep the numbers down! Stop them! Keep them out! Ration them. Tell the babies they can’t come here! There ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE.”

There was a curious silence, during which the face of Lord Downacre became first purple and then ashen pale. The change of wind had come at last, and the influence of the new speaker was upon him. Slowly the great idea put into his head by Ronnie Beeches faded, and in its place came the contradiction.

At last he spoke, and his voice was altered.

“You are right,” he said. “By gad, sir, you are right. Why — oh, why did I never see it in that light before? There *are* too many people in the world.”

“George Candry,” sighed his sister-in-law (in a way), “you have come to your senses.”

“*Your* opinion,” smiled Ronnie at her, “should carry a good deal of weight, since, being on both



*Lord Downacre changes his mind*

Committees, you have had a unique opportunity of judging the matter.”

“George,” whispered Claire urgently, “what are you going to do? These women will be coming in at any moment.”

“Timeo Candraos et dona ferentes,” said Ronnie; “but the women are coming to *demand* gifts. Let them come! This house has withstood worse things.”

Lord Downacre’s sense of the dramatic became overwhelming. With a wide sweep of the arm he swept all the mugs from off the table and they clattered on to the floor.

“Away, false vanities of a demented brain,” he cried, “there are too many mugs in the world! And too many notices!”

Seizing a pencil he added a syllable to one of the notices, making it read, “Women, Undo your duty!”

“But you don’t want them to kill their babies, do you?” gasped Mrs. Cab-horse.

“Better that,” he replied, “than that life should become one long underground railway journey, with everyone standing on everyone else’s toes. I want to be able to walk from London to Edinburgh and never pass a soul; through all the big cities and find them silent,

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except for perhaps a Town Clerk, cleaning his nails.”

“For I’ll take the high road,  
And you’ll take the low road,  
And I’ll meet nobody — and nor ’ll you!”

There was a sound of running footsteps in the hall, and in the doorway appeared a large lady in a blue print apron. In her arms she carried two babies. This lady observed: “Jig! Jig! Jig-a-gig. Look at the pretty gentleman. He’s going to give you an ickle mug. Sssh! now, there, there!” And she rocked the babies to and fro.

Ronnie Beeches stepped forward briskly.

“Allow me to introduce you, Madame. This is Lord Downacre. George, this is Ickle Mama. The lady who left the room in such a hurry to consult Bradshaw is his sister-in-law (in a way).”

The large lady curtsied. “I ’ope you’ll pardon me coming in like this, I’m sure. But really we got so tired standing out there, and me being near the door, I just slipped in like...”

She gazed at the floor, strewn with glittering objects.

“What luvverly mugs! Oh, sir, ’ow ever did you come to drop them?”

“One moment, my good woman,” said Lord Downacre, very pale and stiff. He turned about,





*A town clerk cleaning his nails*

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and going out on to the balcony held up his hand. The community-whining died down for a moment.

“Go home!” he shouted. “Go home! I have changed my mind.”

A roar of anger burst out and rolled up the face of the houses like a wave. The people in the room gathered nervously behind Lord Downacre and listened.

But the stout lady wasted no time. She put both the babies under one arm and began to gather up as many of the mugs as she could hold.



*But the stout lady  
wasted no time*

Over the head of the central figure on the balcony hung a notice:

LET THE NEW GENERATION  
COME: AND LET IT COME  
QUICKLY !



Solemnly he took out a piece of coloured chalk and crossed it out. "There!" he exclaimed to the listening multitude. "I have crossed out the coming generation. You have committed a grave mistake. I am not sure that it is not a crime. One of those crimes against the Human

Race for which the punishment is to spend the rest of your life in a castle in Holland surrounded by every luxury... it makes no difference that I have encouraged you. It was wrong.”

“WOT!” cried a rough voice from the room. “Don’t I git no mug then? Here’s my two bybies — bless their little ’earts — just waiting to kiss the gentleman!”



“No,” replied Lord Downacre over his shoulder. “You *don’t* get no mug. There are too many babies in the world.”

“Then darn you and your blarsted Beuro! To think I made these kids a’ purpose too!”

And with that she flung the two babies over their heads, out of the window, and seizing an armful of mugs rushed out of the house.

“God! What has she done?”

“Stop! Stop!”

“They’re killed!”

The twins fell with a sharp thud on the pavement outside, missing the crowd by inches. Ronnie Beeches ran violently after the woman.

Struggling and pushing his way among the massed mothers, Blanyre appeared beneath the balcony and picked up the babies. Lord Downacre, leaning over the railings like some huge Juliet, pronounced his final word: "As the railway companies so rightly say: All children must be paid for — but the price is beyond our pocket!"

Blanyre held up the infants head downwards by their long clothes, one in each hand, "these certainly are not worth the price," he shouted back; "for they are made of wood! How careless of you to drop them; they might have been broken."

At that moment there was a gigantic surge of feet towards the front door of the house.

Mr. Mantis — man of action — grasped Lord Downacre's elbow and hurried him towards the back door and safety, and somehow his other arm found itself around the waist of Muriel Pelladower. The three of them slipped out into



a quiet back passage, and the roar of the maddened mothers was soon merged in the general hum of

London.

Absent-mindedly squeezing Muriel's waist, Mr. Mantis remarked, "A little baby is a dangerous thing!"

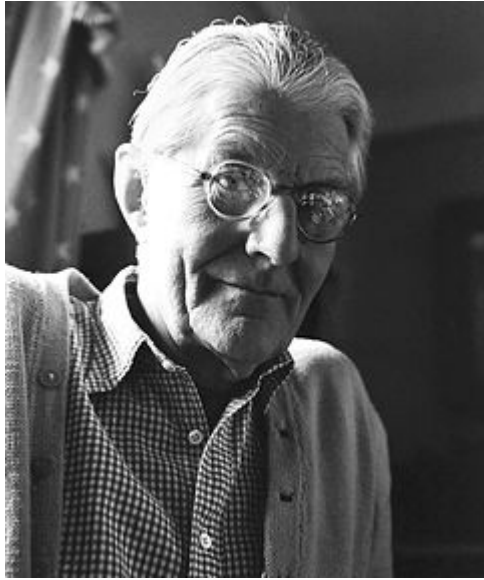
"I know!" said Muriel.

But Lord Downacre marched onward with his head thrown back like a man who has looked the world squarely in the face and seen that it is round...





## About the Author



Lancelot De Giberne Sieveking, D.S.C was born on 19 March 1896 in Harrow, Middlesex. He was a very creative child, writing from the age of six, and starting a novel aged 13 which would ultimately see print when he was 26. In-between, he “actively supported the Suffragette movement” before war broke out.

Sieveking (as well as his brother, Valentine Edgar Sieveking) served during World War I. Lance signed up with the Artists Rifles before “joining the Royal Navy Air Service, [and winning] the D.F.C” before being “shot down over the Rhine” in 1917 and held as a German prisoner-of-war.

Upon his return to England, he attended St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, and was close friends with fellow-Cambridge student Eric Maschwitz. The



two were (with others) both editors on The new Cambridge chap book between 1920 and 1921.

He made his name with the BBC, starting out as assistant to the Director of Education, before “he went on to introduce the first running commentaries and adapt numerous classics for radio drama... it has been argued that the production of the first television play springs from his ingenuity”. He was drama script editor for ten years (1940–50) before retiring “six years later in 1956”.

He wrote The Stuff of Radio (1934), and his radio dramatisation of C. S. Lewis’ first (chronologically) Chronicles of Narnia title The Magician’s Nephew was approved by Lewis personally. In 1927, he designed “an eight-squared drawing meant to assist BBC radio’s football commentators,” (as well as listeners at home, who could get a copy of the same chart in the Radio Times. According to one BBC commentator, the chart is considered a possible origin of the phrase “back to square one”. (although the OED credits the origin to the children’s game of hopscotch)

Another early BBC radio drama producer, Val Gielgud, said of the “not altogether fortunate” Sieveking:

“He was perhaps over much influenced during his most impressionable years by G. K. Chesterton, and by the theory of that master of paradox that because some things were better looked at inside out or upside down such a viewpoint should invariably be adopted. Talented and imaginative beyond the ordinary, his eyes

gazing towards distant horizons, he was liable to neglect what lay immediately before his feet.”

Harry Heuser interprets Gielgud’s words in the following way:

“Sieveking was an audio-visionary, a trier of radiogenic techniques at whom actors and colleagues would ”gaze with a certain dumb bewilderment” as he “exhorted them to play ‘in a deep-green mood,’ or spoke with fluent enthusiasm of ‘playing the dramatic-control panel, as one plays an organ.” There was not much use for such a one in radio. As Gielgud put it, even British radio broadcasting, “provided him with no laboratory in which experiments could be carried out.”

In 1930, while radio drama was still relatively new, Sieveking found in the still-newer medium of television a place in which he could experiment with new ideas. To that end, (in collaboration with Gielgud) he brought an adaptation of Luigi Pirandello’s short play *L’uomo dal fiore in bocca* (1923) to television as “The Man with the Flower in His Mouth”, airing on 14 July 1930 – the first British television play. Very little of Sieveking’s work survives in whole or in part (aside from some scripts – see below), but in 1967, “The Man” was re-made, “authentically re-produced and presented by the original producer, Lance Sieveking, supported by the original art-work (by C R Nevinson) and music recording”.

His papers (and those of his ancestors, dating from 1724 to 1971) are housed in the Lilly Library, Indiana University, and consist of “correspondence, radio plays, manuscripts for short stories, for novels, and for

nonfiction works, diaries, drawings, and photographs”as well as “many photographs from the World War I period showing airplanes, North Africa and from Lance’s captivity as a German prisoner-of-war.”

